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THE STRANGE CAREER OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION
Michael Bérubé

PROFITS FOR JUSTICE

IT'S TIME TO PAY FOR THE REVOLUTION OURSELVES

by MICHAEL H. SHUMAN & MERRIAN FULLER

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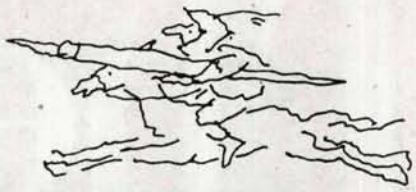

R. O. BLECHMAN

PEOPLE POWER IN OHIO & THE NATION

Cleveland

■ David Moberg, in "Lessons for Labor" [Dec. 27], did a nice job of reviewing the role of labor in the 2004 election. His point that a "flood" of staffers to battleground states is "ultimately no substitute for home-grown networks" is right on the money, as is his notion that we need to engage in ongoing political education. In my experience coordinating efforts by the Communications Workers in Ohio, Michigan and Wisconsin, I believe this might have made a real difference in many "red" counties that we lost by narrow margins.

Unfortunately, much of the current debate about labor's structure ignores these points. If we move to the more consolidated "rationalized" structure that some are suggesting, we sacrifice many of our existing "home-grown networks," replacing them with larger, more staff-dominated structures. While there is much talk about "resources," it is forgotten that our most plentiful resources are human ones—our members. Developing volunteer activists at the local level who are involved in organizing and political action as well as collective bargaining is not easy, but it is possible, in my experience. If labor spends energy on that task rather than on searching for a quick-fix structural solution, we'll be much further along by 2006. SETH ROSEN

Administrative Assistant to the Vice President
CWA District 4

BRINGING IN DEFUNCT

New York City

■ William Greider's interesting "Defunct Economists" [Dec. 20] takes my teacher, Nobel laureate Paul Samuelson, to task for having taken "so long" to admit that the "antiglobalization protesters in the streets...[are] not entirely wrong" when they protest free trade (a lead component of globalization). But it is important to understand exactly what Samuelson has argued.

Samuelson argues that if China experiences changed productivity, this could immiserize the United States. Not surprisingly, this can happen because this "exogenous" external development may reduce US gains from trade. But this does not mean that the United States should abandon free trade. If it did, its losses would only increase further. It would be much as if, on being hit by a hurricane, Florida were to decide not to trade with the rest of the United States. All international economists today understand this; so does Professor Samuelson.

But if Samuelson is not arguing that protectionism will moderate the downside effect on US national income of external developments in the world economy, what is his position on the altogether different question of whether the freeing of trade will also help our workers' real incomes? Here, the co-author of the celebrated Stolper-Samuelson theorem on the subject has long been explicit that free trade (compared with protection) could harm workers as a class.

The question here is, however, an empirical one: Have our workers been harmed by the progressive freeing of trade barriers in the postwar period? The answer of many economists (including my distinguished MIT student Paul Krugman) is that the culprit is technical change that economizes on unskilled labor rather than trade with the poor countries. Greider's facts are not in serious doubt; his anti-trade diagnosis is. JAGDISH BHAGWATI

GREIDER REPLIES

Washington, DC

■ I think it's sweet of Professor Bhagwati to come to the defense of his old teacher. I also suspect Bhagwati is one of those former students Samuelson is scolding for overselling the wonders of free trade. WILLIAM GREIDER

COMMIES—GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

San Francisco

■ In his review of my book *Washington Gone Crazy*, Mike Marqusee seriously misrepresents my work ["Patriot Acts," Dec. 13]. I would like to set the record straight. Marqusee wonders, "How was the Communist Party 'unique' in its challenge to this system?" and then states, "The party was first and foremost a political entity." He accuses me of not having any "feel for the left as a shifting milieu, for grassroots activism or for the labor movement."

A good deal of the book is concerned with just these issues. The Communist Party was a unique challenge precisely because it was not primarily a political entity but rather simultaneously a political entity and a conspiracy. Grassroots members may have joined the party for its avowed political purposes but they seldom stayed long or had any impact on the party's policies or direction; these were indisputably the province of the leadership cadre, which on all important issues took orders from Moscow and secretly cooperated with Soviet intelligence in the United States.

Marqusee seems to have missed Chapter 12, which tells the story of two grassroots party members and their involvement in the labor movement: Angela and Estolv Ward, who gave their hearts and souls to the CIO and faced physical danger in organizing workers during World War II at Basic Magnesium Inc. in Nevada, which brought them into conflict with Pat McCarran and the AFL. The Wards were stalwart organizers—too stalwart in fact for the party, which had pledged not to abide any wartime strikes that might impede the Soviet Union's war effort. When the BMI workers voted to strike, the Wards supported them and were severely chastised by the party as a result. Much of the Wards' story prefigures the later, much more famous, strike by the same union that is celebrated in the film *Salt of the Earth* (including the wives of miners taking to the picket line)—with the exception that the party opposed the manifest will of the workers. Perhaps this is why the story has never made it into the secondary, often partisan, scholarly literature on American Communism, a literature Marqusee accuses me of ignoring, although a glance at my source notes shows I draw upon it when needed.

Later in the book I describe the Wards' suffering during the McCarran and McCarthy years. I don't think any fair reader would categorize my portrayal of the Wards as knaves or dupes, as Marqusee accuses me of doing. They were brave, principled radicals, and I admire their conviction (if not convictions) and courage.

Which brings me to Marqusee's second major distortion: my treatment of the evolution of the American left. When, precisely, did the Communist Party get the right to stand in for the American left? A major theme in my book is the struggle for the soul of the left, as embodied in Pat Jackson's journey from fellow traveler to anti-Communist, a trip repeated by, among others, Paul Douglas, Reinhold Niebuhr, Norman Thomas and Dwight Macdonald. None of them ever gave up their socialist politics, but all of them finally realized that the Communist Party was the enemy of democratic socialism. There was such a thing as left-wing anti-Communism, although it was usually referred to as the non-Stalinist left. Being shorn of illusions is not the same thing as being disillusioned.

One of the goals of my book was to disentangle anti-Communism from McCarthyism and show the diversity of possible responses to the totalitarian nature of the Communist Party, which achieved a rare success in nurturing the myth that there were no Communists in Washington and that the party had nothing to do with spying. Any honest accounting of the McCarthy years has to include some reckoning with the party's true nature. I state this premise in my opening pages: "There actually were Communists in Washington. But it was the hunt for them that did the real damage." MICHAEL YBARRA

(Continued on Page 25)

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EDITORIALS

Tsunami & US Priorities

As the death toll from the tsunami disaster continued to grow, the Bush Administration scrambled to answer widespread criticism that it responded too slowly and with too little aid for the victims. The White House has now increased the pledge of US assistance to $350 million from an original $15 million, sent Secretary of State Colin Powell and Florida Governor Jeb Bush to the region and dispatched ships and troops to help with the relief efforts. The speed with which the Administration changed course suggests that it not only misjudged the severity of the crisis; it also underestimated the compassion of the American people.

The tsunami disaster has reopened American hearts and minds—at least temporarily—to the suffering of other people, which our own tragedy in 2001 had largely closed off. In the days following September 11, conservative commentators argued that the terrorist attacks had changed America—how we saw ourselves and how we must deal with the world. The Administration used that sentiment to militarize US foreign policy and to hijack American idealism for a misguided war on Iraq. It reduced our relationships with other nations to a simple equation—"you're either with us or against us"—in the "war on terrorism." Lost in the process was not just America's traditional respect for international law and cooperation but also much of our compassion for those less fortunate and less secure.

A new catastrophe, this one thousands of miles from our shores, has now given us a chance to reclaim some of what we lost and to play a more constructive and fitting international role than the one we've played for more than three years. The tsunami has made it easier to see just how distorted our national priorities have become: $200 billion for a war of occupation, when just a portion of that money could have helped eradicate much of the disease and illiteracy that afflicts the underdeveloped world. As important, it has reminded us of the vulnerability we share with other people and of the goodwill our power and resources can generate when they're used to help those people recover their lives and livelihoods.

The question is, How can we build on the America that has been reawakened? We are indeed a "stingy" nation (a criticism leveled at all Western countries in the aftermath of the tsunami but most aptly describing the United States), giving a mere 0.15 percent of our national income in development aid. This is the lowest percentage of any industrialized country and, relative to GDP, less than a third of what the Europeans give. It's also only a fifth of what we pledged in 1970 and recommitted ourselves to in 2000. Meanwhile, the needs grow. Some 150,000 or more people died as a result of the tsunami, but that many people die every day because of poverty, curable diseases, AIDS or lack of such basics as clean water.

Given the public outpouring of sympathy for the tsunami victims, the Bush Administration had no choice but to put on a different face. It is now up to those of us who believe in this more compassionate and progressive America to see that Washington follows through on its pledges of support after the television cameras are turned off. It is also up to us to turn public concern into more durable changes in American policies and priorities—ones that involve a far greater commitment to institutions like the United Nations that increase our collective ability to deal with both natural and man-made disasters and that move us from a politics of military security to one of human security.

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COMMENT

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Gonzales: The Fight Is On

It says something that the most vigorous opposition to Alberto Gonzales's nomination for US Attorney General emanates from recently retired military officers, not the civil rights lobby. It also says something that even as the White House, through a new Justice Department memo, sought to defuse Gonzales's record as the legal godfather of Abu Ghraib and waterboarding, word leaked of an emerging Administration plan for lifetime internment of terror suspects, without trial, in a worldwide network of US-built prisons. This is the first Attorney General nomination of global consequence, a dimension to which Washington only slowly awakened as Gonzales headed into his testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee.

From the day he was named by President Bush, Gonzales posed a dilemma for Democrats and civil rights organizations: Is this nominee worth fighting? Conventional wisdom counseled caution: As the first Latino AG nominee, he has a compelling personal history; he would secure easy confirmation from the Republican Senate; and besides, Gonzales is ABA—Anybody But Ashcroft. Democrats (notably New York's Chuck Schumer) immediately signaled their likely acquiescence. For weeks, most leading civil rights groups, with the exception of the defiant Center for Constitutional Rights, limited themselves to toothless calls for "vigorous scrutiny." The best liberals could hope for, went the insiders' whispers, would be to "make a record" that might inhibit a future Gonzales nomination to the Supreme Court.

On the eve of the Gonzales hearings, a different dynamic began to emerge. First the Justice Department published a memo "superseding" the elaborate justification for torture Gonzales himself had commissioned from the Office of Legal Counsel's Jay Bybee: a new memo so patently timed to the hearings that it only made questions for the nominee more compelling, especially since the White House continued to withhold crucial documents detailing Gonzales's role in the torture scandal. Notable, too, was the new memo's overt evasion of the original Bybee document's assertion of unreviewable presidential authority to classify prisoners outside the protections of the Geneva Conventions and torture laws.

Then the intervention of a dozen retired high-ranking military officers—some of them lifelong Republicans—made it clear that this is no ordinary confirmation fight. No domestic Cabinet nominee has ever been charged by generals with having "fostered greater animosity toward the United States, undermined our intelligence gathering efforts and added to the risks facing our troops around the world." These career officers—who take their oaths to the Constitution, not George Bush—believe that Gonzales's legal tactics are wrecking years of post-Vietnam efforts to prevent contemporary My Lais.

It's one thing for the ACLU to criticize Gonzales, quite another when he gets denounced by the very military leadership Republicans have long claimed to stand for. The officers' letter provided covering fire as People for the American Way—until January in the "cautious scrutiny" camp—added its full-throated opposition, and religious leaders began to speak up.

These retired officers (and Human Rights First, which spon-

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sored their press conference) remembered what Democratic pragmatists forgot in the despairing weeks of November: For reasons ranging from ideology to personal malfeasance, seemingly secure Cabinet confirmations can spin wildly out of control when the heat is on—witness John Tower and Zoë Baird. And Gonzales is not universally admired in the Senate Republican Caucus. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, formerly with the military's legal corps, remains disgusted by Abu Ghraib and the chain of decisions that led to it. Just days before Gonzales's hearing, Senator Richard Lugar blasted the new White House internment-without-trial plan. (That plan, depending on the existence of authoritarian allies to do our dirty work, suggests just how cynical is the President's "democracy on the march" rhetoric.)

So the fight is joined. Gonzales, it is true, is not a fanatical religious conservative or an orthodox strict constructionist. His record suggests instead an enthusiastic apostle of the imperial executive. "Making a record" in the event of his Supreme Court nomination is at best secondary: The far more immediate danger is the record he will make as Attorney General, and the record of defeatism Democrats will establish if they offer anything less than principled opposition. With the Gonzales fight, the Senate—Democrats and Republicans alike—directly confronts issues that have lurked in the background in the Bush years: questions not just of human rights for terrorism suspects worldwide but of a presidency absorbed in its own quest for unrestrained power, both domestic and international.

BRUCE SHAPIRO

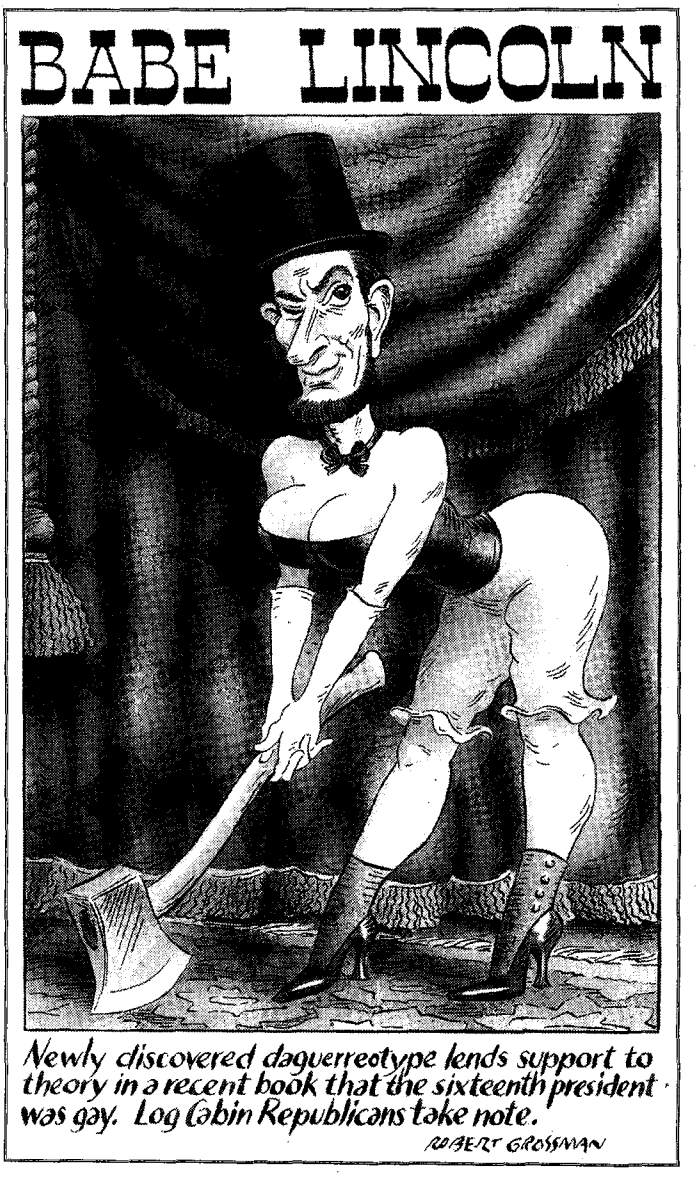
Bruce Shapiro's latest book is Shaking the Foundations: 200 Years of Investigative Journalism in America *(Nation Books).*

An Appropriate Objection

American elections never play out perfectly. But the dramatic imperfections in the 2004 presidential election in Ohio, as detailed in a series of letters and reports circulated by Representative John Conyers (www.house.gov/conyers), deserved a far more serious response than they received from most Congressional Democrats. Conyers got his information the old-fashioned way: by listening. When Ohioans began to raise concerns about irregularities in the approach of Republican Secretary of State Ken Blackwell—a Bush campaign apparatchik—to conducting the election and counting the votes in the contest that ultimately decided the race between Bush and John Kerry, they initially got more encouragement from Greens and Libertarians than from national Democrats. But Conyers, the ranking Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, took the complaints seriously enough to go to Ohio. There, he and minority staffers for the Judiciary Committee conducted hearings and investigations that reached two basic conclusions: First, voting and vote-counting procedures in Ohio were so flawed that citizens were disenfranchised; second, legitimate questions about the problems with the Ohio vote have yet to be fully resolved. Accordingly, Conyers announced that he would object to the certification of the results from Ohio when Congress met to review and approve Electoral College votes on January 6.

Conyers found a handful of allies among House Democrats, mostly from the Congressional Black Caucus, but he had less luck in the Senate, where at press time only one senator—California's Barbara Boxer—was considering signing on. At least one backer is required to sustain a formal objection. If sustained, the objection would force a full debate in both House and Senate on whether to count Ohio's votes for George W. Bush, although in the end those Republican-controlled chambers would have defended Bush's claim.)

The events surrounding the certification question offered an eerie echo of 2001, when members of the Congressional Black Caucus tried to object to the certification of electoral votes from Florida, only to be ruled out of order because no senator backed their complaint. The scene of African-American members being gaveled into silence was one of the most powerful moments in Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*, and it was impossible to imagine that it would ever be repeated. Yet this year Conyers, the senior African-American in Congress, pled for a chance "to debate and highlight the prob-


BABE LINCOLN
Newly discovered daguerreotype lends support to theory in a recent book that the sixteenth president was gay. Log Cabin Republicans take note.
ROBERT GROSSMAN

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COMMENT

lems in Ohio which disenfranchised innumerable voters."

It is important to note the language Conyers used. He was not calling for overturning the election of George W. Bush. Rather, he was suggesting that, based on the evidence of voter disenfranchisement, flawed or corrupted voting machinery and improper procedures for counting and recounting votes in Ohio, it was inappropriate for Congress simply to rubber-stamp the decisions of Blackwell and other Ohio officials. Ultimately, that objection never had a chance to get beyond the debating stage. But Conyers was right to argue that a formal objection needed to be made, and that the objection should be broadly supported by Democrats—and honest Republicans—in both the House and Senate. That it was not is a sad statement about the seriousness with which most Democrats took their party's pledge to "count all the votes this time"—and about the prospects for reform of erratic and unequal voting systems that, as Conyers and his aides have ably illustrated, are prone to abuses that undermine confidence in America's democratic experiment. JOHN NICHOLS

The Country Doctor

It's a time of sudden hope in the crisis between the Palestinians and Israelis, a weird time of moderation and calls for renewed negotiations. Arafat is dead, and those who allowed that creaking symbol of so many things to stand in the way of peace are now behaving as if they are ready for a new moment.

I talked recently with Amos Oz, who in one of those odd moments of synchronicity has returned to the international spotlight at the exact moment when peace has once again become at least a possibility. He has just published his memoir, and the book, which tells the story of his childhood and the beginnings of the state of Israel, gives Oz renewed authority in his role as a pursuer of peace.

At this particular moment in the Middle East, Oz is a powerful figure, and his suddenly available personal story exposes the roots of his political convictions. A child whose family included a large helping of right-wing Eastern European refugees, he grew up in Jerusalem very much in the shadow of the Holocaust. Almost the entire Jewish population of his mother's hometown in Ukraine—some 25,000 people—was massacred in the space of two days by Nazi forces. His mother, who had left for Jerusalem before the disaster, never recovered. As a boy, Oz attended right-wing political meetings in Jerusalem.

Eventually, he rebelled and moved far from those roots, both physically and politically; nonetheless, what most informs his thinking to this day is Israel's right, and even need, to exist. In everything Oz says about the conflict, there is an unstated but passionate feeling of urgency and protectiveness about the country, along with a strong undercurrent of loathing for the occupation and that special shame that many Israelis feel for their homeland as a result—an almost private disgust, as if the occupation were some terrible, dirty family secret that everyone shares. Oz and other old-guard Israeli leftists are concerned both that Israel is in the absolute wrong as an oppressor and that, from the point of view of the survival of what is still an infant nation, the occupation is delegitimizing and poses an existential threat.

A founding father of Peace Now, Oz has been unwavering since 1967 in his support for a negotiated, two-state solution. He is one of the *éminences grises* behind the recent Geneva Accords, a detailed blueprint for resolution of the conflict worked out by Israeli and Palestinian politicians and activists that picks up where the Camp David and Taba talks left off. These "understandings," as they are known, as well as the figures from both sides who negotiated them, have been harshly criticized and mocked by Ariel Sharon and the rest of the Israeli right. Over the years, indeed, Oz has faced right-wing opprobrium from his compatriots; his children were attacked and tormented in the schoolyard; he has been scorned and mistrusted by radical Palestinians, and yet he has soldiered on like a tank, convinced of the rightness of his proposals, reiterating them as if to a stupid or wayward pupil.

Oz's was a lonely voice in the years after the 1967 war, declaring that the Palestinians had the right to national self-determination and that the conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis was one of "right versus right." This, at a time when Israeli politicians then considered to be toward the left were saying things like "It was not as though there was a Palestinian people.... They did not exist." That was Labor's Golda Meir, in 1969. The climate has changed so much since then, Oz says, that if Golda came back today, "she would not be accepted except by the far right."

Oz seems, even for an Israeli of his age, unusually crusty, blunt and pragmatic, obsessed with resolution of the crisis. In our conversation, he was eager, as he has been more and more in recent years, to distance himself from any seeming passion for justice, from any romance with peace: Simply put, he'd like to see an end to the killing and mutilation. But not, as he says, wincing at the thought, because he "loves peace and is reaching out for the enemy." As far as Oz is concerned, he is not battling right-wing politicians but what he perceives as the sentimentality of the international community. He talks like a medic on a battlefield.

Oz claims he does not hate war. "What I hate is aggression." In America and in Europe, he says, "people divide the world between good guys and bad guys. You get up, you sign a petition in

CALVIN TRILLIN

ASSIGNING RESPONSIBILITY

Defending Rumsfeld, Bush says Rummy's great,
That as a planner he has been first rate—
Respected in the White House and the ranks.
The same is true, of course, of Tommy Franks,
For he and Tenet and, yes, Bremer, too,
Got medals as they bid their jobs adieu.
And Bush, whose orders all these men obeyed,
Can't think of one mistake he might have made.
So everyone involved's a crackerjack.
The mess that made itself is in Iraq.

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Respected columnist Rich Warren says, "The QuietComfort 2 lives up to its name, enveloping you in blissful sound in the utmost comfort. It's easy to forget they're on your head." To enjoy peace and tranquility, simply turn them on. To add Bose quality sound, attach the included audio cord and connect them to a home stereo, laptop computer, portable CD/DVD/MP3 player or in-flight audio system. When you're done, their convenient fold-flat design allows for easy storage in the slim carrying case.

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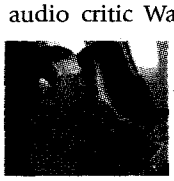

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favor of the good guys, you launch a demonstration against the bad guys, you express disgust and go to sleep. With me, it's more of a hospital emergency-room attitude. Stop the bleeding, stabilize the patient and then maybe you can heal the wounds and scars. It's less important who takes the blame than to stop the bloodletting. When you get to the scene of a car accident, the last thing you do is ask who's responsible. You get a stretcher."

The struggle to resolve the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians (indeed, between any two historic opponents) wavers between these two ways of thinking, between shouting and negotiating. When peace is advancing, pragmatism holds sway, and the talk is of road maps and dialogue and endgames, an end to bloodshed. This is Ozspeak. When violence is in the ascendant, as in the past four years, the conversation turns into a screaming match about blame and history and justice, and bloodshed becomes almost an end in itself. Sharonspeak, say; or the public language of Hamas leader Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi, assassinated in Gaza last April by Sharon's army.

The pragmatists look at the conflict as linear—having a beginning, a middle (apparently the long part) and an end—while the militants on both sides regard it as cyclical, returning over and over to the same insoluble struggle, piercing the same wound again and again. Of course, because this is Middle Eastern politics, the person who was a militant may become a pragmatist from one historic moment to the next—and vice versa. Arafat comes to mind, as does the late Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin.

"Over the years, I've become if anything less and less radical," Oz says, "though I would still be a red radical in the eyes of my father." In an earlier conversation he'd said: "In Israel, people don't change their minds. Even when they tell you the opposite of what they said a year before, they'll say that it's the same thing they told you last year; you just didn't understand what they were saying."

Scratch an Israeli peacenik, in other words, and you will very often find a Zionist; blow up a bus or a discotheque or a pizza parlor filled with Israelis, and you will find that every single Israeli is, to some degree, a Zionist. This is what happened during the second intifada: The Israeli left was silenced by Palestinian violence; while at the same time, the continuing, hardening occupation and the expansion of the settlements, combined with Israeli military actions against the Palestinians, turned Palestinian pragmatists and supporters of negotiations into backers of their own side's aggression.

This is Oz in 1982 in *In the Land of Israel*: Perhaps the Israelis should "concede heavenly Jerusalem for the sake of the Jerusalem of the slums, waive messianic salvation for the sake of small, gradual reforms, forgo messianic fervor for the sake of prosaic sobriety. And perhaps the entirety of our story is not a story of blood and fire or of salvations and consolations but, rather, a story of a halting attempt to recover from a severe illness."

Though the hard right wing in Israel and parts of the US Jewish community have cast him as far to the left, in fact Oz is a moderate of almost phlegmatically considered opinions. He likes to shock with his studied lack of political emotion. And although much of the time he writes with great moral anger, in a seething fury, his advice to those who suffer from such anger is always to sit down and swallow the bitter medicine he prescribes, "teaspoon by teaspoon." He has been writing the same prescriptions for at least three decades—he says the same things today that he said in 1973, and again in the 1980s, and yet again in the late 1990s.

"Sharon came, and he will go one day," Oz says now. "The situation is always evolving toward peace. Among the Israelis and the Palestinians, the vast majority knows it. Sharon knows it. The settlers know it. Hamas knows it. They don't like it, but they know it. And so the patient with clenched teeth is ready for the surgery. Now all we need is more courageous doctors."

Because of his memoir—its human core, its love of the details of character, its author's decent, even modest, assertion that all relations should be tempered with understanding and mercy, from the closest to the most distant, from the familial to the international—Oz has recently been compared to Chekhov, who, besides being the great Russian playwright and fiction writer was also a country doctor (a literal not a metaphorical one, unlike Oz). "At the end of a Shakespeare tragedy," Oz wrote in 1993, "the stage is strewn with dead bodies, and maybe there's some justice hovering high above. A Chekhov tragedy, on the other hand, ends with everybody disillusioned, embittered, heartbroken, disappointed, absolutely shattered, but still alive. And I want a Chekhovian resolution, not a Shakespearean one, for the Israeli-Palestinian tragedy. These, in a nutshell, are my politics." And so his politics continue, a dozen years later. AMY WILENTZ

Amy Wilentz, a Nation *contributing editor, is a former Jerusalem correspondent for* The New Yorker *and the author of* Martyrs' Crossing, *a novel about Jerusalem (Ballantine).*

The Hero Within

If many strangers die all at once, as in the tragedy of the tsunami or the Rwanda massacre or a war like the one in Iraq, it is a moral problem, to be dealt with through politics or philosophy. The death of a single good person, announced on the radio or in the newspapers, presents a different kind of problem. What can be done?

To teach or speak or write against the grain and still be heard beyond the confines of the agreeable may be as good a definition as any of a heroic life. A person can internalize such thoughtful heroes without ever having read one of their books or listened to their speeches. To have opposed the Vietnam War or to speak out now against the villainy in Iraq is to have inherited the character of Seymour Melman, just as understanding the effects of globalization is to be in some way as politically pertinent as Richard J. Barnet. Merely to have lived at the same time as Susan Sontag is to have admired her, although sometimes in the form of an argument with her ideas, but there was no way to live quite so discerning a life without her. In sum, our heroes are us, which is why the death of a hero confounds an admirer.

The old philosophers may have understood death as a part of life and let it go at that. Freud defined death in two categories: your death and my death. The first category makes perfect sense. It is nature's magic trick. Now you see it, now you don't. Gone. De-

(Continued on Page 26)

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THE FEDS SAY THEY WANT SCIENTIFIC PROOF THAT MARIJUANA IS MEDICINE.

BUT DO THEY?

Three years ago scientists from the University of Massachusetts and the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies[1] applied to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) for a license to grow a research plot of marijuana.

No response.

A year ago, they asked the DEA for permission to import 10 grams from the Dutch Office of Medicinal Cannabis.

No response.

Then they asked the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) to sell 10 grams from NIDA's marijuana farm at the University of Mississippi.

Still no response.

The researchers could, of course, get all the marijuana they need from any high school or college campus in the country but that's not legal. NIDA has a monopoly on the supply of marijuana that can be used for research.[2] The Institute seems to be using that monopoly to obstruct the very research they're supposed to be facilitating.

So the scientists are suing the DEA, NIDA, Health and Human Services and the National Institutes of Health for "unreasonable delay" resulting in the obstruction of scientific research.

Science should be in the hands of scientists, not political ideologues.

Common Sense for Drug Policy
www.CommonSenseDrugPolicy.org www.DrugWarFacts.org
Mike Gray, Chair; Robert Field, Co-Chair

[1] For further information contact www.maps.org
[2] NIDA was given a monopoly only on the supply of marijuana and not on any other Schedule I drug.

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JONATHAN SCHELL

Something Strange

As I followed the initial coverage of the tsunami in the Indian Ocean, I was reminded of a time in the early1980s when I spent some months researching the effects of a nuclear war—the thermal pulses from the detonations, the bursts of radiation, the blast waves spreading out from ground zero, the immediate local fallout and the delayed stratospheric fallout. Of course, my research was into a merely possible event—humanity's only actual experience of nuclear blasts having been the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—whereas the news from the Indian Ocean was actual.

Still, the similarities were striking. As would happen in a nuclear war, villages and small cities were scoured from the face of the earth. "Before" and "after" satellite photographs showed the erasure even of geographic features of the landscape. Islands sank. New harbors formed. Towns were lakes. Like photographs of bombing damage, the before photos showed the fine articulation of human cultivation and dwelling—in this case, a salad of greenery laced with lines of red tile roofs and roads—and the after pictures were a smear of browns. As in nuclear war, the sweep of destruction was immense, involving a dozen countries, some as far away as East Africa. As in nuclear war, the ground was carpeted with corpses. Like the fires set by nuclear war, the flooding waters tore friends and families apart, leaving some to die while others saved themselves. As in nuclear war, it was not just immense numbers of individual lives that had been swept away; it was also the support systems of human life—transportation, fresh water, power, medical services. And so many of the injured who might otherwise have survived could not be cared for, and died. As in nuclear war, the many tales of individual survival both brought the experience to life and yet at the same time seemed to falsify it. For at its heart were the tens of thousands who had perished and could tell nothing.

Yet while a nuclear war would be man-made, the tsunami was nature's work. "There is something strange happening with the sea," someone called out to *Washington Post* reporter Michael Dobbs, who was vacationing in Sri Lanka and saw the sea suddenly rise. Just as strange, it then withdrew with a sucking sound, leaving a wide stretch of the seabed bare, the fish gasping. And then it rushed back in again. A man in Indonesia said, "The water separated, and then it attacked." A Kenyan man said, "It was like seeing the sun setting in the east. The tide was crazy. The water wasn't following the rules." Something strange happened with the land, too, when the earthquake that caused the tsunami struck. And soon even the sky seemed to be acting strange. "It was like Armageddon," said Zukarnaen Buyung, a Sumatran construction worker. "We didn't know it was a wave. We thought it was some kind of rain. Everything behind us was black. The sky, the water." All of nature—water, land and sky—was breaking the rules, and attacking.

Few disasters have come as greater surprises than this one, and part of that surprise was its origin in nature rather than man. Perhaps that's one reason George W. Bush and Tony Blair, shuttered in the closed universe of the man-made "war" on man-made terror, were so slow to awaken to the dimensions of the catastrophe. (Both leaders remained on vacation for more than a week after the event.) They seemed unable to conceive of a tragedy that was both irrelevant to their crusade and hugely exceeded it in scale and human importance. But in truth, most people around the world seemed disoriented by nature's shock. The human capacity for mass destruction has been so highly developed in our time that we seem, without quite realizing it, almost to have claimed title to the art, as if to say, "Wait, how can nature do this? Isn't killing hundreds of thousands of people *our* business?"

Certainly, the response was slow, both locally and internationally. The original American offer of $15 million was a disgrace to the country. Even to mention such a figure in the face of such suffering was a mockery. The word "stingy," used by UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Jan Egeland, is one of the kindest that might be applied. Of course, as Egeland soon pointed out, he had not explicitly singled out the US response to the tsunami for criticism; he had spoken more generally of the miserly contributions in recent years from all rich nations—which nowhere reach even 1 percent of GDP—to international humanitarian aid. (In this company, the United States is a veritable Scrooge, giving about 0.15 percent of GDP.) But coming the same day as Bush's $15 million commitment (a third of the sum that a businessman has just paid to buy a large house in Wainscott, Long Island, and less than last year's year-end bonus for the president of Goldman Sachs), it was inevitable that the criticism would be taken as it was. The US commitment has now risen to a more respectable $350 million and is likely to rise further. Misinterpretations don't usually lead to good results, yet this one has.

But the literal meaning of Egeland's criticism was as important a message as the salutary misreading. In his exact words, "We were more generous when we were less rich, many of the rich countries, and it is beyond me why we are so stingy, really.... Even Christmastime should remind many Western countries, at least, how rich we have become." He was referring to the historical fact that in the past few decades the richer the rich have become, the less they have given in aid. Why, we might ask, is there, alongside armed forces in almost every country, no established international rescue army—no well-funded international force fully equipped with emergency gear ready to give prompt aid in any large-scale catastrophe? Initial funding might be $100 billion—a mere 10 percent of the trillion or so the world spends annually on arms. Why, when human need is the greatest, should the human response always be left to improvisation? There is no reason to think that nature had any lesson in mind, whether about the world's bloated, multiplying nuclear arsenals or anything else, when it shoved one tectonic plate beneath another, causing the earthquake that caused the tsunami. But we are free to draw a lesson: Leave mass destruction to nature. Our job should be to protect and preserve life.

Jonathan Schell is the Nation Institute's Harold Willens Peace Fellow. The Jonathan Schell Reader *has just been published by Nation Books.*

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

The Pen of Swift, the Brush of Bosch...as Usual

The new year promises a rich manure of hypocrisy and bad faith. Take the current tumult about the UN high command and the oil-for-food imbroglio, which right-wing columnists are gnawing on with relish. There are no good guys here, just vistas of corruption and bad faith stretching into the distance.

Certainly, weep not for Kofi Annan, whose ductility toward the imperatives of Empire was comically revealed in the very same press conference where a pertinacious journalist extorted from the reluctant Secretary General the grudging admission that the war on Iraq was illegal. Later on, Annan offhandedly invoked "our allies," a term that should be alien to the lips of any UN Secretary General, but that accurately reflects political realities.

The private dealings of the Annan family may well be fragrant with corruption. But it's hard to get too excited about alleged skims off the oil-for-food deals against so vivid a backdrop as hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians, many of them infants, being starved to death or dying for lack of suitable medicines under the UN sanctions commanded by the United States.

On one calculation by Jude Wanniski, if sanctions had been lifted in 1991 Iraq would have collected $126 billion in oil revenues in the fourteen years thereafter, thus paying off its international debts and feeding its population. PR-wise for the United States, the sanctions were dire enough in terms of killing defenseless Iraqis that oil-for-food was installed in 1996, benefiting, among others, the Kurds, who have fine representation in Washington and who were to get a big slice of the oil revenues.

From his side, Saddam was able to organize oil-revenue kickbacks to the Iraqi government from some customers which weren't filched by the program's supervisors in New York. So what? Any capable leader in the same situation would have done likewise. But of course the neocon lobby here, through such willing conduits as Senator Norm Coleman, the *New York Sun* and that diva of drivel from the *Wall Street Journal*'s editorial page, Claudia Rosett, have hyped the oil-for-food "scandal" as a way of somersaulting the war lobby past the great disaster of 2004, the nondiscovery of WMDs.

The second rule of propaganda is that when the first Big Lie explodes, immediately make up another one. Vigilant students of last October's report from the Iraq Survey Group, headed by Charles Duelfer, on the nonexistence of WMDs noted that Duelfer tried to shift attention from the embarrassment of nonapparent WMDs by suggesting that they were not only eternally immanent but also imminent as long as Saddam Hussein led Iraq, because he might well have used revenues from the oil-for-food program to ramp up his old WMD programs. Of course, the Bush Administration pounced on this morsel, and the neocon press has been chewing on it ever since.

It would take the brush of Hieronymus Bosch to do proper justice to the moral darkness prevailing in the residence of Richard Holbrooke, as the man who vied with Joseph Biden to be John Kerry's Secretary of State assembled a posse to rub Annan's nose in the UN's woes, and proffer Mark Malloch Brown as the savior. Brown, whose private lobbying roster has included such clients as the ineffable and unlamented Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada of Bolivia, will now return to UN HQ as US-designated commissar at Annan's elbow, just in time to prompt the Secretary General to acclamations for whatever result issues from the elections in Iraq at the end of January.

Say, Waiter, Where's the Blood on My Margarita Glass?

On the topic of the Beast of Baghdad, January's *Esquire* brings an interesting article by Sara Solovitch reporting her discovery that Jumana Hanna's accounts of rape and torture at the hands of Uday Hussein don't appear to have the intimate connection to reality trumpeted by the Bush Administration and by such reporters as Peter Finn of the *Washington Post*, who promoted her in that paper in July 2003.

Hanna poured out her story to many eager ears belonging to Finn; Bernard Kerik (surely an expert in mendacity); New Jersey Superior Court Judge Donald Campbell, who was the coalition's top legal adviser; Paul Wolfowitz; Hanna's shrink, Paul Linde; and finally Solovitch, who was hired to co-write Hanna's story. Solovitch says she began to entertain some doubts when pondering Hanna's claim to have received an MA in accounting from Oxford, but she somehow put off making a simple phone call to Oxford till she had spent a lengthy period of presumably well-paid toil checking other aspects of Hanna's story.

I could have saved the publishers a wad of money. In atrocity stories there are some things that don't ring true, even when dealing with such well-credentialed butchers as Saddam and his sons. Take the story, subsequently identified as one concocted by a Western intelligence agency, that Uday had put some of his victims through a wood chipper. Anyone using these chippers knows the damn things jam if inconvenienced by anything with a diameter larger than that of a stick of asparagus, let alone an Iraqi human, however scrawny. Uday's chipper, whose origin can probably be traced to a scene in the movie *Fargo*, just didn't pass muster, same as the incubator story from the first Gulf War, first identified in this column as intrinsically preposterous.

Among the horrors of Uday's boudoir divulged by Hanna to many, including Solovitch, was the following:

> She was raped for days. A virgin when she entered, she heard the guards ask "Master Uday" what he wanted to do with her blood. He ordered them to sprinkle it around the rim of his whiskey glass like salt on a margarita.

That's the point at which any person equipped with minimal power to suspend willing belief should have said, "Oh, come on!" No call to Oxford would have been necessary. But then, there's no ear more credulous than the one that yearns to believe. ■

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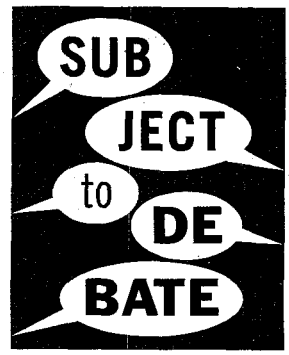
KATHA POLLITT

Bittersweet Bomblets



I was listening to *Morning Edition* on December 30, and up came one of those end-of-the-year heart-warmers that's supposed to make you feel there's hope for this old world yet. It seems that a 9-year-old Iraqi boy, Saleh Khalaf, came across a cluster bomb and "because it was round and smooth" he picked it up and it blew off all of one hand and most of another, opened up his abdomen, took out his left eye and horribly scarred his face. His 16-year-old brother was killed. Fortunately, and this is the point of the story, he was treated "against protocol" in a US Army hospital and flown with his father for further treatment in Oakland, where he was showered with help by a generous local couple and is now learning English and American expressions like "hold your horses." Recently his mother and sisters were permitted to join him in California. "I'm happy now," says Saleh.

Spunky child, loving family, wonderful doctors, heroically kind and generous benefactors. No wonder the reporter, Luke Burbank, got a bit emotional ("the moment you meet [Saleh] you have the overwhelming urge to protect him"). But wait a minute. What was that bit about a cluster bomb? Time was, cluster bombs got at least a sentence to themselves, even in a heart-warmer—a definition, a mini-history of their infamous usage against civilian populations, maybe even a quote from one of the many organizations that have tried to ban them under the Geneva Conventions. You know, *cluster bombs*. Remember how during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan we read about village children blown apart by Soviet bomblets said to be brightly colored and to look like toys? Those were cluster bombs. It wasn't the Soviets, though, who dropped that "round and smooth" mini-bomb alongside the road where Saleh found it. It was the United States.

So this is what we've come to: We celebrate the rescue of one child and gloss over the inconvenient fact that it was our weapons that maimed him for life. The boy who lives cancels out the brother who died, the moral heroism of his befrienders cancels out the moral turpitude of our government, excuses ourselves, and lets us bask in poignant uplift. Over at NPR, it's a driveway moment.

Sometimes I think America is becoming another place, unrecognizable. David Harvey, the great geographer, tells the story of a friend who returned to the United States last spring after seven years away and could not believe the transformation. "It was as if everyone had been sprinkled with idiot dust!" Some kind of mysterious national dumb-down would explain the ease with which the Republicans have managed to get so many people agitated about the nonexistent Social Security crisis—at 82 percent ranked way above poverty and homelessness (71 percent) and racial justice (47 percent) in a list of urgent issues in a recent poll—or about gay marriage, whose threat to heterosexual unions nobody so far has been able to articulate. Mass mental deterioration would explain, too, how so many Americans still believe the discredited premises of the Iraq War—Saddam Hussein had WMD, was Osama's best friend, was behind 9/11. But even as a joke it doesn't explain the way we have come to accept as normal, or at least plausible, things that would have shocked us to our core only a little while ago. Michelle Malkin, a far-right absurdity, writes a book defending the internment of the Japanese in World War II, and before you know it Daniel Pipes, Middle East scholar and frequent op-ed commentator, is citing Malkin to support his proposals for racial profiling of Muslims. And he's got lots of company—in a recent poll almost half of respondents agreed that the civil liberties of Muslims should be curtailed. Pipes's proposals in turn seem mild compared with the plans being floated by the Pentagon and the CIA for lifetime detention of terrorist suspects—without charges, without lawyers, in a network of secret prisons around the globe. Kafkaesque doesn't begin to describe it—at least Joseph K. had an attorney and the prisoner of "In the Penal Colony" got a sentence.

As I write, the Senate is preparing to take up the nomination of Alberto Gonzales to replace John Ashcroft as Attorney General. Despicable as Ashcroft proved to be, and much as the Senate should have foreseen that and rejected him, he had not at the time of his nomination been responsible for memos justifying torture. He hadn't argued that the President stood above the law and could pretty much do whatever he wanted. He had not been in the center of months and months of revelations about the horrific doings at Abu Ghraib, in detention centers in Afghanistan, or, even as you are reading this, Guantánamo. How can it be that the smart money is on Gonzales being confirmed? That Charles Schumer, a popular blue-state Democrat with a war chest bigger than Alexander the Great's, is already talking sagely about the presumption that the President gets the Cabinet members he wants?

If only the problem *was* stupidity. But Chuck Schumer, Daniel Pipes, the people at *Morning Edition*, are all very smart. Even Michelle Malkin is probably not actually dumb. And anyway, you don't need a high IQ or a PhD to believe in law and human rights and the Golden Rule. The problem is fear. The media are afraid of looking too "liberal," intellectuals are afraid of being called "anti-American"—and they will be if they challenge too vigorously the crimes being committed in America's name—Democrats are afraid of having their remaining bits of turf plowed under and sown with salt by the Republicans, the left is afraid of looking too "secular" and not "supporting the troops," and ordinary people are afraid of being blown up by the terrorist next door.

Fear dust. That's what it is. Fear dust.

* * *

If you would like to help victims of the tsunami, consider a donation to MADRE. This international women's human rights organization is helping with immediate relief and is partnered with INFORM, a Sri Lankan women's group, to work with victims for the long term, when the big money donors have moved on. Give at www.madre.org or mail a check (write INFORM on the memo line if you want your donation to be dedicated solely to tsunami relief) to 121 W. 27 Street, Room 301, New York, NY 10001. ■

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ARTICLES

PROFITS FOR JUSTICE

by MICHAEL H. SHUMAN & MERRIAN FULLER

Now that the religious right dominates all three branches of the federal government, one of the few avenues still open for creative progressive initiative is business. To get an inkling of what's possible, drop by the Used Book Cafe in the SoHo district of New York City. There you'll find an independent bookstore that lacks the selection of a Borders but enjoys regular visits from leading agents and publishers in the city and boasts a fabulous events calendar that reads like a Who's Who of contemporary writers and musicians. What's truly revolutionary about the cafe, however, is that last year the business, along with sister thrift shops, provided more than $2 million to its parent nonprofit, Housing Works, one of the nation's largest advocacy groups for homeless people with HIV/AIDS. Housing Works runs clinics, conducts public-policy research, lobbies federal and state officials, even leads sit-ins. It is fearless, aggressive and stunningly effective—and its $30 million of annual work would be impossible were it not for a vast range of realty, food service, retail and rental companies that help pay the bills.

"What we are about," says Housing Works president and CEO Charles King, "is the business of changing the entire paradigm by which not-for-profits operate and generate the capital they need to carry out their mission—a new paradigm based on sustainability and social entrepreneurship." King is helping other nonprofits adopt these ideas through the Social Enterprise Alliance, which recently held its fifth annual conference, involving 600 social entrepreneurs from thirty-nine states and seven countries.

This new paradigm increasingly defines our own jobs. One of us, after raising some $15 million for various progressive nonprofits, decided six years ago to start creating socially responsible enterprises, including community-friendly poultry production, small-business venture capital and buy-local purchasing clubs [see box on page 18]. The other has run a network of progressive independent businesses in Philadelphia, an effort based at the White Dog Cafe, one of the city's top restaurants, which serves food from local farmers.

We believe that the spread of social entrepreneurship, and the positive alternative to conventional fundraising it provides for raising resources, offers a fundamentally new and powerful strategy for progressives to expand their power and their voice in the United States.

Entrepreneurial Nonprofits

Mainstream nonprofits actually have been entrepreneurial for years. Every year the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* publishes a list of the top 400 nonprofits in the United States, ranked by their fundraising. Re-rank the October 2003 list on the basis of revenues not derived from private sources such as donations and foundation grants, and the top performers, unsurpris-

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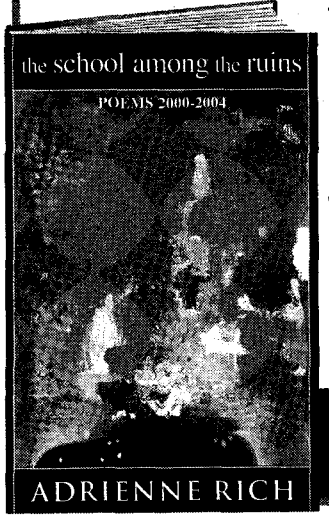
The School Among the Ruins

A new collection of poetry by Adrienne Rich

"One of a handful of major American poets whose every new work is a cause for excitement, Rich is... stunning in her use of skewed, penetrating language." —*Library Journal*



"Many revelations come to life through willfully fragmented language, scattered thoughts, and poems that are as complex as the topics they address."—*San Francisco Weekly*

"Rich is today in the strange position of being an establishment rebel... we are fortunate to have [her] in the trenches."—*Time Out New York*

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ingly, are universities and medical centers. Remove these heavyweights, and one finds a fascinating assortment of do-gooders. Lutheran Services, number one, serves as an umbrella for 300 organizations that supplement their many contracts, grants and donations with a wide range of fee-for-service programs to help, among others, the poor, the elderly, the sick, at-risk youth and refugees. Number two is the YMCA, which supports its youth outreach programs with a vast network of health clubs. The American Red Cross, number three, draws blood and sells it to hospitals and health centers. Fourth is Good Will Industries, which raises more than a billion dollars through the collection, refurbishment and sale of secondhand clothing and household items, and nearly another half a billion from fees for contracts and services. In eighth place is the Girl Scouts, which generates millions of dollars through the sale of cookies.

For the most part, these charities are engaged in work lacking the kind of coherent vision of systemic change that progressives embrace. But there is no good reason why a progressive organization with business sense and imagination could not create its own universities, healthcare systems, secondhand stores and cookie operations that provided substantial revenue for more serious political work.

Some, in fact, do. Antioch College and the New School University, among other schools, have designed social-change-oriented curriculums that have graduated several generations of activists. Planned Parenthood's 850 clinics, in some communities the only places where contraception and safe abortion are available, generated more than $306 million last year, a financial base that has helped insulate it against various retaliatory strategies by anti-choice groups. For several decades, Green's Restaurant in Fort Mason Center in San Francisco has sold not cookies but high-end vegetarian meals to help finance the Zen Center, which has numerous programs for peace, the homeless and prisoners.

Below the radar of the top-400 list are many other huge progressive success stories. The Rodale Institute has long underwritten cutting-edge work in sustainable agriculture, community economics and alternative healthcare through a publishing empire that includes *Prevention* magazine, a fixture on supermarket checkout lines. The Worldwatch Institute has supported its environmental work through the widely sold *State of the World* series. Greenpeace has creatively used everything from special music albums to concerts to raise many millions for its work.

Or consider Global Exchange, whose founders, Medea Benjamin, Kevin Danaher and Kirsten Moller, have been outspoken critics of free trade and the war in Iraq, and leaders of the California Green Party. More than half the organization's budget is financed through reality tours to countries such as Cuba; Green Festivals, which draw thousands of participants; fair-trade stores; and speaking fees. The organization is now creating a Global Citizen Center by renovating a building in San Francisco that will house a coalition of progressive groups and a community meeting space. It plans to bring down the costs through rentals, sales and fees generated by green businesses on the ground floor.

Michael H. Shuman is vice president for enterprise development at the Maine-based Training & Development Corporation. Merrian Fuller has just stepped down as director of the Philadelphia-based Sustainable Business Network.

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To get a full sense of how far US nonprofits could go to become self-financing, check out Cabbages & Condoms, a popular restaurant in Bangkok. As your senses become intoxicated by the aromas of garlic, ginger, basil, galangal and lemongrass, you cannot avoid noticing the origins of the name. On top of each heavy wooden table is a slab of glass, under which are neatly arranged rows of colorful prophylactics. Posters and paintings adorn the half-dozen large rooms, all communicating the restaurant's central message: The AIDS epidemic afflicting Thailand can be checked only through the unabashed promotion and use of male contraception. With balloon animals made from carefully inflated and twisted condoms and the after-dinner candies replaced with your own take-home "condom-mints," even teens cannot escape the message prominently framed on the wall: "Sex is fun but don't be stupid—use protection."

What makes the five "C&C" restaurants unique, along with an affiliated beach-front resort and numerous gift shops, is that they are all owned by the Population and Community Development Association, a rural development organization that has been a leader in promoting family planning and fighting AIDS in Thailand. Seven out of every ten dollars spent by PDA on such activities as free vasectomies and mobile health clinics are covered by the net revenues from its sixteen subsidiary for-profits. Were PDA dependent on funding from the Thai government, the World Bank or even the Rockefeller Foundation, it no doubt would be told to tone down the message. Jokes on its website—like "the Cabbages and Condoms Restaurants in Thailand don't only present excellent Thai food, the food is guaranteed not to get you pregnant"—would certainly be discouraged.

The cash flow gives PDA a measure of confidence and boldness. The founder, Mechai Viravaidya, has no qualms about his decision to employ for-profits: "Unlimited demand is chasing limited supply [of charitable donations]. No longer are gifts, grants or begging enough. From day one, thirty years ago, we have been acutely aware of sustainability and cost-recovery."

Progressive Resistance

Too many progressives, the notion that nonprofits can enlist the power of entrepreneurship to gain independence and increase their effectiveness is heresy. Philanthropy guru Pablo Eisenberg's view is that "neither charities nor foundations and other donors should harbor the illusion that more than a minuscule number of nonprofit groups can ever become self-sufficient by running businesses or charging fees for their services. Their missions do not lend themselves to self-sufficiency."

The fear that a nonprofit mission will be warped by business values is not, of course, unfounded. J. Gregory Dees of the Duke University Fuqua School of Business argues, for example, that the entry of the YMCA into the exercise and health club business pulled it away from its original mission to serve at-risk young men and made it an upper-middle-class organization. Many community development corporations (CDCs), founded in the 1960s to lead the fight against poverty, now build crass shopping malls and sprawling neighborhoods for the middle class. The bottom-line logic of business can lead these enterprises to neglect people without money, including the young, the old, the poor and the sick.

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However, critics overlook the fact that many of these dangers already swirl around those rattling a tin cup for "soft money" from wealthy individuals and foundations. Building a philanthropic base of support instead of an entrepreneurial one can cripple an organization's mission, and wreck it altogether when the well runs dry. Most progressive nonprofits have engaged in a kind of fundraising arms race in which our best leaders focus more time, energy and resources not on changing the world but on improving their panhandling prowess to capture just a little more of a philanthropic pie that actually expands very little from year to year. Armies of "development" staff spend as much as a third of an organization's resources not to advance the poor or other needy groups but to cultivate wealthy donors. Significant numbers of our colleagues create campaigns, direct-mail pitches, telemarketing scripts, newsletters and other products exclusively to "care and feed" prospects, and frame positions and adopt tactics that will not offend the rich.

Those of us who chase foundation dollars must make a devil's bargain with a system (as one of us argued in these pages seven years ago; see Shuman, "Why Progressive Foundations Give Too Little to Too Many," January 12/19, 1998) that often undermines the effectiveness of progressive beneficiaries through small, single-year, single-issue, project-oriented and action-over-thinking grants. In this context, successful fundraising may well reduce the chances of effecting significant social change, because too many foundation overseers, despite admirable intentions, discourage the long-term, systemic thinking progressives so desperately need. And increasingly, major foundations are actively setting social-change agendas themselves, often with little consultation with grassroots groups, pulling these same groups into new and distracting coalitions and bringing more and more projects in-house.

As Pablo Eisenberg notes, the Philadelphia-based Pew Charitable Trusts "has built a reputation for pouring millions of dollars into its own environmental projects and creating new organizations." Moreover, its recent decision to convert from a foundation into a charity means that "Pew will find it easier to bring many of its programs in-house and become less dependent on nonprofit organizations to run its programs and carry out its mission."

If Mohandas Gandhi were a typical leader organizing in a nonprofit environment like ours, he would probably be wearing a three-piece suit and working in a plush office with his law degree prominently displayed. He would have little time to lead protests, since every other week would be spent meeting with donors—and those power lunches would hardly go well with fasting. He would be careful to avoid initiatives like salt marches or cotton boycotts, so as not to offend key donors. To sharpen his annual pitch to foundations, he would be constantly dreaming up new one-year projects on narrowly focused topics, perhaps a one-time conference on English human-rights abuses, or a PBS documentary on anti-colonial activities in New Delhi. To insure that various allies didn't steal away core funders, he would keep his distance and be inclined to trash talk behind their backs. In short, there's little doubt that the British would still be running India.

The real Gandhi, of course, promoted personal and community self-reliance, so that people would have the time, energy and resources to participate in a serious mass movement. It's no accident that some of the most successful social-change organizations in the United States have achieved a modicum of self-reliance through membership dues, fees for service and active community-based chapters. The strong membership bases of Greenpeace and the Sierra Club enabled them to take bold stands against free trade and NAFTA long before their foundation-dependent brethren like the Natural Resources Defense Council.

We believe it's time for American progressives to break free of their philanthropic habit—and for truly progressive funders to help them do so. Those of us serious about social change increasingly must get down to business, figuratively and literally. Every nonprofit may not be able to generate all its funding through revenue-generation, but every nonprofit certainly can generate a greater percentage than it is doing now. According to an IRS sampling of charitable filings in the year 2000, fees for service already account for two-thirds of all nonprofit budgets, yet relatively little of this is being done by progressive nonprofits.

Beyond Typical Nonprofits

Even if nonprofits *can* generate more of their own revenue, it's questionable whether the IRS-prescribed mold, the "Section 501(c)(3)" organization, offers the best structure for doing so. Despite many success stories of enterprising nonprofits, we share the skeptics' nervousness about confusing nonprofit and for-profit missions. Plus, we are concerned that nonprofits, however entrepreneurial, are usually poor competitors in the marketplace.

Consider just one issue—finance. While a for-profit can meet cash-flow difficulties by issuing bonds or stock, a nonprofit usually must turn to debt. Without much in the way of assets to serve as collateral, few nonprofits qualify for significant loans. Even well-run nonprofits tend to grow slowly, if at all. With a social mandate to spend accumulated earnings, most perpetually operate on the brink of bankruptcy.

After reviewing this and other problems facing nonprofits (high staff turnover, poor management, overreaching boards, zealous IRS regulators), one of the leading promoters of entrepreneurial nonprofits, the Roberts Foundation, concedes, "Were there a significant competitive advantage to being a non-profit engaged in revenue-generating activities, we would have witnessed a marked increase in the number of businesses seeking…to take advantage of the added financial benefit of non-profit status in the marketplace. In fact, we see just the opposite."

The solution for a revenue-minded nonprofit is not to give up on entrepreneurship but to set up a subsidiary. Put everything that can conceivably be placed on a break-even footing (or better) into the revenue generator, and use the proceeds to underwrite everything else through the nonprofit. The subsidiary can be either a for-profit (our preference), a separate nonprofit with a clear revenue-generating mission or even just a department of the nonprofit with a strong measure of autonomy. In all these models, the mission-oriented nonprofit need only become an investor, leaving actual operations of such an enterprise in more business-oriented hands.

The Rocky Mountain Institute, a leading promoter of alternative energy technology in Snowmass, Colorado, has embraced this strategy. E-Source, begun as a project within the nonprofit in 1986, provides in-depth analysis of services, markets and tech-

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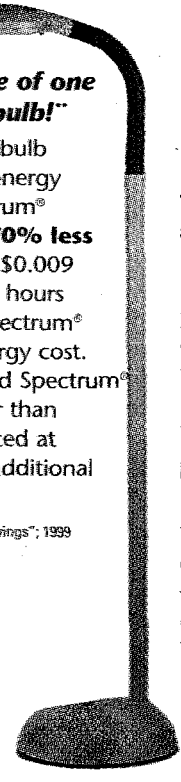

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nologies relating to energy efficiency and renewable energy production. In 1992 RMI secured a program-related investment from the MacArthur Foundation to move the work into a for-profit subsidiary. By 1998 it was generating about $400,000 for the parent nonprofit, but RMI decided it could do even better under new management, so it sold the company to Pearson PLC in Britain for $8 million. Today, RMI assists and benefits from other for-profit spinoffs, such as Hypercar, Inc., which aims to create a lightweight body architecture to improve the efficiency of the entire US automobile fleet.

Another example is the Intervale Foundation, a nonprofit based in Burlington, Vermont, which derives more than half its income from inside enterprises. On a 325-acre tract of land Intervale develops socially responsible farm businesses while protecting natural resources. The leading cash generator is the largest commercial composting facility in the state. Its farms program collects rents and fees for land, equipment and other infrastructure from a dozen for-profit organic farms and community-supported agriculture initiatives. Other ventures under development include a conservation plant nursery and technology that processes cow manure into methane and other salable products.

Pioneer Human Services is a nonprofit based in Seattle that assists a wide range of at-risk populations, including the unemployed, the homeless, alcoholics and addicts, and ex-convicts. The organization serves 6,500 people a year and generates nearly all its $55 million budget through a web of ambitious subsidiary nonprofit businesses: cafes and a central kitchen facility for institutional customers, aerospace and sheet-metal industries, a construction company, food warehouses, a real-estate management group and consulting services for other nonprofits. Most of the jobs in these businesses are awarded to its at-risk clients, allowing it to further its mission to integrate clients back into society.

These kinds of subsidiaries, of course, are not without risks. A cautionary tale comes from the Milwaukee YWCA, where the director, Julia Taylor, had distinguished herself as a model entrepreneur. Between 1986, when she began her tenure, and 2002 she had developed a variety of for-profit businesses, including a computer software company and a plastics factory, to expand the organization's budget nearly 100-fold. The collapse of these subsidiaries in 2003 left the YWCA saddled with millions of dollars of debt. Taylor herself was one of only two board members overseeing the computer software company, and she paid herself stock options (ultimately worthless).

Minnesota Public Radio's sale of its mail-order catalogue business to Dayton Hudson Corporation for $120 million was also controversial. The deal was executed by the Greenspring Company, a for-profit subsidiary whose executives—including William Kling, who is also president of the nonprofit MPR—are expected to pocket $7.3 million personally.

What made Taylor's and Kling's actions ethically problematic was not that they acted entrepreneurially but that each kept one hand in the nonprofit while putting the other in the pocket of the for-profit. Nonprofits must operate at arm's length from related revenue generators, with different management, staff, activities and cultures. And personal enrichment of any person within the nonprofit must remain strictly prohibited. But the examples above also suggest how nonprofits, if they are careful about how they structure the relationship, can use sister companies to become more financially independent without drifting from their mission.

Foundations that really believe the mantra that grantees become more self-reliant should support these efforts, but to do so they must overhaul the way they do business. Today the typical foundation usually spends 5 percent of its assets annually on do-good nonprofits—the legal minimum—derived from investing the other 95 percent in do-bad for-profits. In a recent inter-

Kicking the Grant Habit

Hello. My name is Michael and I'm a grantaholic. I've raised millions in foundation money over the past two decades, and I admit that the next time I need a financial fix, I'll be tempted to raise more. I have a problem. And here's what I'm doing about it.

Six years ago, when I stepped down from directing the Institute for Policy Studies, I started working with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation to design a community-friendly poultry operation called Bay Friendly Chicken, a company designed to undo most of the anti-labor, anti-environment and anti-consumer-health practices of our principal competitors, Tyson and Perdue. Soon BFC will be issuing its first stock—available only to residents of the Chesapeake Bay bioregion, so we can keep ownership local.

BFC has multiple bottom lines. It will serve its investors, including the initial nonprofit sponsor, Community Ventures, which earned stock for writing a feasibility study and business plan. It will improve the lot of the myriad stakeholders in chicken production on the Eastern Shore. And it will serve as a model for how to create diversified ownership of a company through stock that is still rooted in community.

The longer-term goal is to make it possible for Americans to invest their pensions and mutual funds in local business. This brings me to the second business I'm launching, in Santa Fe, called Gulliver LLC. Gulliver is seeding venture funds that invest exclusively in local ma-and-pa's. Most venture funds, when their five to eight years of participation are done, aim to create companies that will be traded on the NASDAQ. Gulliver, in contrast, seeks to create local stock issues, and ultimately a New Mexico stock exchange for local companies.

The third set of businesses concerns local purchasing. I'm working with several groups—in Philadelphia; Portland, Oregon; and Millinocket, Maine—that are creating gift, credit and debit cards to reward consumers with discounts whenever they buy local. A small fee for the cards will finance a linked buy-local campaign.

Any or all of these initiatives may not succeed; the jury will be out for a long while. But I keep in mind Thomas Edison's words that it took thousands of light-bulb-design failures before he could come up with one that worked. Kicking the grantaholic habit is not easy—we all must be prepared to stumble, learn and grow—it's just easier than not kicking it, and a helluva lot more fun.

M.H.S.

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A life-long student of these issues, Professor Robinson is a Philosophy Faculty Member at Oxford University and a distinguished Research Professor, Emeritus, at Georgetown University. He has published well over a dozen books on a remarkable range of subjects, including the connection between his two specialties, philosophy and psychology, and aesthetics, politics, and human nature.

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view, Mark Dowie, author of *American Foundations: An Investigative History*, said the Pew Charitable Trusts, "the largest environmental grant maker of all the foundations, was earning more money in dividends from the nation's largest polluters than they were giving to the environmental movement."

The Hewlett Foundation's in-house scholar on entrepreneurial philanthropy, Jed Emerson, finds the skewed use of foundation resources indefensible: "Imagine a baseball team manager choosing to send just two of her three dozen players through the rigors of spring training, regular practices and coaching. The rest of the team members would be enrolled in 'anti-training,' in which they'd be encouraged to park on the clubhouse couch all day watching *Dukes of Hazzard* re-runs."

Foundations need to start investing a greater percentage of their asset base in businesses aligned with their missions. The good news is that IRS law allows "program-related investment" (PRI) losses to count toward the minimum 5-percent-per-year payout. Consistent with its mission, the F.B. Heron Foundation now uses PRIs to invest $42 million of its $226 million asset base in housing, real estate and other community-development enterprises in low-income neighborhoods. These investments thus far have performed as well as the foundation's remaining assets, and, in Emerson's view, illustrate how a foundation has put "more than *four times* the annual grant assets...at work." [Emphasis in original.]

The total percentage of foundation asset bases being invested in PRIs right now? An embarrassing one-tenth of 1 percent.

What About Pure For-Profits?

The possibility of a for-profit undertaking social-change work without a linked nonprofit also needs to be considered. While we reject the libertarian argument that every human problem has an economic solution, many social-change issues clearly have economic dimensions that are susceptible to creative business plans.

Hate Bush's hot pursuit of nuclear power? Launch energy-service companies to spread conservation measures, or build local wind farms to take control of your own electricity future. Concerned about the poor, minorities and women having equal access to credit? Create more community banks, credit unions and micro-enterprise funds. Troubled by pharmaceutical prices that make life-saving drugs unattainable for impoverished people across the globe? Start, as several companies based in the Third World did, companies that mass-produce affordable knock-offs of high-priced American drugs.

By some reckonings, we're now on the third generation of socially responsible businesses. The first generation comprised Fortune 500 companies that tried to improve their social performance, often in small ways with large public-relations budgets. Many executives in these companies continue to share best practices through Business for Social Responsibility (BSR), which got started in 1992.

The second generation represents small and medium-size businesses whose proprietors are more eager to align themselves and their companies with progressive causes, and whose CEOs collaborate through organizations like the Social Venture Network (SVN). We applaud the Body Shops, the Ben & Jerry's and the Benettons of the world, each of which manufactures decent products, comports (however imperfectly) with reasonably responsible labor and environmental standards and piggybacks snippets of political education in its advertising. The importance of the millions given by these kinds of companies—Newman's Own, for example, has donated more than $150 million to charities, including many progressive causes—should not be underestimated. But at the end of the day, the core products of each, whether cosmetics or ice cream, are pretty ho-hum, and they are not linked to any particular community.

What has impressed us most is the growing number of local businesspeople who not only "walk the talk" of social justice in the small details of their operations and products but also tout the virtues of local ownership. This third generation is now being led by the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE) and by the American Independent Business Alliance (AMIBA). Both emerged in recent years as grassroots alternatives to BSR and SVN, and have mushroomed into three dozen chapters with several thousand affiliated small businesses. Each promotes local ownership of the economy and pushes for new public policies that remove the tilts in the playing field that currently favor badly behaved big business.

One of the founders of BALLE is Judy Wicks, whose White Dog Cafe in Philadelphia is as much a community organizing center as a restaurant. Radical speakers from around the country provide a steady stream of lectures. An adjacent store sells "fair trade" products and will soon be introducing a line of locally made clothing. The White Dog itself embodies principles of social justice and environmental stewardship by paying all employees a living wage, insisting on humanely raised meats and eggs, using locally grown ingredients and running on wind electricity. Twenty percent of profits from the restaurant go to the White Dog Cafe Foundation, carrying on the cafe's mission through nonprofit activities.

American progressives have long preferred nonprofits over for-profits. Yet why should we lionize all nonprofits, even those with poor labor practices, bureaucratic excess and undemocratic power structures? And why should we view all business as the enemy, whether big or small, global or local, dirty or green, exploitative or responsible? These attitudes are self-destructive. They unnecessarily distance us from millions of otherwise simpatico entrepreneurs. We should remember the potential virtues of many businesses—the positive contributions their goods and services can make to people's lives, the living-wage jobs they can supply, the leverage they can provide for women, people of color and other long-disadvantaged members of our society.

If foundations and donors did not exist and professional panhandling were outlawed, we would be forced to turn to creating and running new enterprises, and our movement would be considerably healthier than it is today. Progressives have become the classic 20-something kid still living at home, expecting an allowance from the deep-pocket parents for a few basic chores, while agreeing, as a condition for the chump change, to obey someone else's rules on social change. It's time to grow up, move on and strike out on our own.

Here's a challenge to fellow activists (one we take seriously ourselves): Let's try to wean ourselves from the charity habit, say

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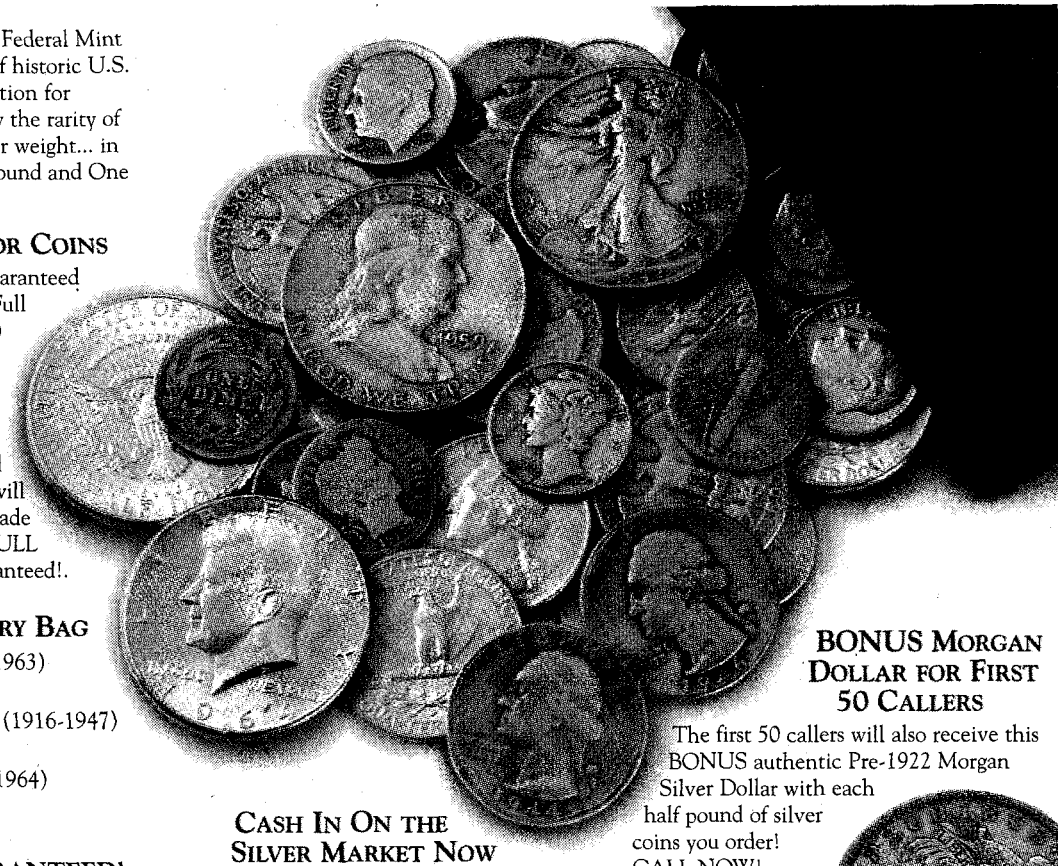

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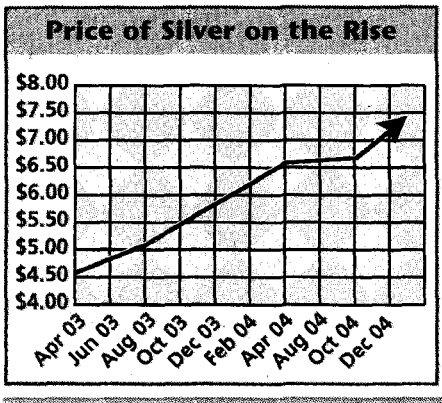

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by 3 percent per year. Think about just one piece of your agenda that could be framed as a revenue generator, dream about it a little, develop a business plan, and give it a try. If you lack the skills, skip your next fundraising class and instead attend one of thousands of entrepreneurship programs around the country. Or hire someone who might start the entrepreneurial subsidiary of your nonprofit.

Gandhi understood that the key to freeing India was to transform his fellow citizens into economically productive agents by spinning their own cloth and taking their own salt from the sea. Martin Luther King Jr. implored African-Americans to form their own credit unions and community development corporations. The secret to being as radical as we want to be—and as radical we need to be—is to finance the revolution ourselves. ■

THE WAR-RAVAGED, OPIUM-DEPENDENT COUNTRY LIVES IN FEAR OF A NEW DRUG WAR.

Afghan Poppies Bloom

CHRISTIAN PARENTI

The rotund landlord, Mr. Attock, sits on the carpeted floor of his little office and living quarters in Jalalabad, Afghanistan. From this one room he publishes a slight and sporadic weekly or sometimes monthly newspaper, but like most people around here, his real business is farming opium poppy. Mr. Attock's land lies about an hour and a half away in the countryside of Nangarhar province, near the Pakistani border, not too far from Tora Bora.

IGOR KOPELNITSKY

"My dear, everyone grows poppy. Even me," says Mr. Attock in slightly awkward English as he leans over to grab my leg, again. Mr. Attock is a bundle of physical and intellectual energy, not all of it well focused. "My dear, you see. Listen. My dear, wheat is worthless. Everyone grows poppy. We will go to my village and you will see."

The next day we tour the village where Mr. Attock owns or manages a farm (it's not entirely clear who actually owns the establishment, but he is in charge). Nangarhar is one of Afghanistan's top three drug-producing provinces. The surrounding fields rotate between corn and poppies. Mr. Attock says he has almost 100 people living and working here as tenant farmers and laborers.

For the past three years, growing poppy in Afghanistan, as Mr. Attock and his tenants do, has been a relatively risk-free and open business. The Taliban had imposed a ruthlessly successful ban on poppy cultivation in 2000; more than 90 percent of cultivation stopped. But since the US invasion in 2001, eradication efforts have been minimal and ineffective and production has again soared.

Globally, Afghanistan's opium business is estimated to be worth more than $30 billion a year, with the vast majority of that cash being captured by players in other countries. One Western counternarcotics official estimated that poppy production increased by 64 percent in 2004. Afghanistan now produces an estimated 87 percent of the world's opium, most of which becomes heroin and morphine. Income from poppy and its associated processing and trafficking are said to contribute $2.8 billion annually to the Afghan economy, a sum equal to 60 percent of the country's legitimate GDP. About a quarter of this money ends up in the hands of common farmers; the rest goes to traffickers. UN researchers believe that 2.3 million of Afghanistan's 20–25 million people are directly involved in poppy cultivation, with many more working in processing, trafficking, moneylending, laundering and other associated activities. The warlords who run this country tax both farmers and traffickers alike.

The British, who are part of the international coalition now occupying Afghanistan, have been in charge of establishing a Counter Narcotics Directorate in Kabul. Its efforts have not been aggressive, and until recently the Americans have openly avoided the issue of poppy cultivation, preferring to focus instead on hunting down the Taliban and Al Qaeda and training the new Afghan National Army.

But after three years of ignoring poppy cultivation and heroin production, the United States has suddenly changed course. In mid-November Washington pledged $780 million toward Afghanistan's war on drugs. If a rigorous campaign against poppy actually materializes, it could radically destabilize the relative calm that now obtains in much of Afghanistan.

Already there is trouble brewing in Nangarhar, where next year's crop is just starting to sprout. Farmers report low-flying planes spraying poison on their fields. Doctors in the area say they've seen a sudden jump in respiratory illness and skin rashes, while veterinarians are seeing sickened livestock. In a harbinger of what a real war on drugs might bring, one farmer in Nangarhar whose son had been poisoned by the spraying told a local journalist, "If my son dies, I will join the Taliban, and I will kill as many Americans as I can find."

Nangarhar's provincial governor, a former mujahedeen commander named Haji Din Mohammed, has said there is "no doubt that an aerial spray has taken place." Other Afghan officials have called it illegal. The United States controls Afghan airspace but denies that it has sprayed, though it is promising a "robust" eradication campaign come spring.

Christian Parenti is the author of The Freedom: Shadows and Hallucinations in Occupied Iraq *(New Press). Research support for this article was provided by the Investigative Fund of The Nation Institute.*

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Mr. Attock is reveling in his role as country squire and host. At his village we sit on cots made of rope and wood to eat a breakfast of thick clotted butter cream, honey and flat bread, washed down with lots of sweet tea. As I wait beneath a huge tree in the courtyard of Mr. Attock's *kala*, a fortress-like family compound, he corrals three farmers and tells them to fetch opium and opium seeds, to take seats and to explain the trade to his guest.

The three farmers, all of them lean and sinewy and looking a bit skeptical, take seats and politely start talking shop. For the most part, growing opium in Afghanistan is like growing any other crop. Though technically illicit, it's all rather undramatic: Farmers are concerned with irrigation, weather, pests, disease and prices. Their tasks are similarly prosaic, consisting mainly of weeding, watering and tending the crops.

The most talkative and inquisitive farmer is Abdul Rakmon. For every few questions from me he has one of his own. "Have you been to Fremont, California? Some people from around here live there now. Where exactly is Fremont?"

Rakmon and his less talkative mates explain that in the warm climate of Nangarhar there is one crop of poppy, though in other areas there are two seasons, the second less productive than the first. In Nangarhar the land is fertilized with manure in late October, and then the poppy seeds are sown in November. By February the flowers bloom, then the blossoms fall away to reveal a bulging seedpod. In March the farmers start harvesting the opium by cutting or scraping the seedpods with small trowels.

From the little scrape wounds oozes a sticky white sap—raw opium. The milk-colored opium turns brown with exposure to air. In Nangarhar the farmers cut the seedpods in the evening and collect the congealed sap in the morning.

"We cut the seedpod with a *ghoza*," says Rakmon, and he gives me a little wooden tool with a serrated metal edge. "You can have this *ghoza* as a present. People in New York will be impressed when they see that," he says with a grin. He's making a sage but cryptic comment on the huge physical, but even greater social, distance between heroin's site of production and its site of consumption. In front of us sits a big sickly-sweet-smelling block of opium.

Mr. Attock has become bored with the interviews and is done eating. He struts around the dusty courtyard, occasionally hoisting himself up off the ground on a tree branch. He wants my colleague, the photographer Teru Kuwayama, to take snapshots of his buildings and retinue of friends and employees from the village.

"What is his name? He looks like a Hazara," says Attock, referring to the Afghan ethnic minority know for their East Asian facial features.

"His name is Teru."

"Yes, OK. Steve!" shouts Mr. Attock, still unable to get Teru's name right. "Steve! Come. Take photos." The farmers tell me that the flowers come in red, white and purple. "Red flowers are the best," says Rakmon. In cooler climates other farmers inform me that white blossoms are superior.

Rakmon and his two friends explain that in most parts of Afghanistan a farmer can get up to seven collections from each seedpod.

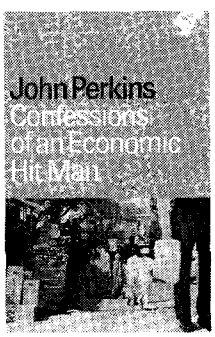
Eventually the plant is tapped out and left to dry. The desiccated seedpods are harvested for next year's planting and the seeds are used to make edible oil. Mothers sometimes boil the dry pods into a tea that they use to drug their infants during long hours of work, or when the children are sick or hungry and unable to sleep.

To illustrate the financial plight that drives people here to grow poppy—which, as good Muslims, they see as a sin—the farmers explain the math of poppy versus wheat. The local unit of land measurement here, a *jerib*, is roughly half an acre; and this part of Afghanistan is so close to Pakistan that commerce is conducted in Pakistani rupees instead of afghanis.

"It costs 1,000 rupees to plant one *jerib* of poppy, and that one *jerib* will yield at least fifteen kilograms of poppy, which is worth 300,000 Pakistani rupees [$5,000], at least," says a farmer named Lal Mohammed. (Later in the central highlands, some farmers tell me they can get twenty-eight kilos of opium per *jerib*.) "Wheat takes twice as long as poppy to grow, and we can buy almost ten times as much wheat as we could produce if we grow poppy instead," says Mohammed. "We have no choice but to grow poppy."

To top it all off, Afghanistan is in the midst of a hellacious six-year drought. Unlike wheat and vegetables or cotton, poppy is very drought-resistant. "All it really needs is a little water early on," says Mohammed.

The farmers confirm what I've heard elsewhere: The opium boom of the past three years has delivered many farmers from onerous debts and allowed them to keep land that they would otherwise have been forced to sell off to the local mujahedeen commanders.



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After all the details of poppy growing are explained, Mr. Attock takes us on a tour of his village and invites me to shoot at a tree with one of his double-barreled shotguns. "Into the leaves, my dear. Up into the leaves. Yes!" The tree survives. Then we have more tea.

Later about six of us pack into a little Toyota four-wheel drive and slowly bounce and lurch down a sandy road lined with tall reeds through a string of small villages. At one of these clusters of mud-walled compounds we stop, interview another group of farmers about local politics and opium, then have a lunch of greasy rice and lamb and smoke hash with our hosts. This is *haram*, forbidden, in Islam. But way out here, is Allah really counting the minor indiscretions? Apparently some farmers think not.

On the dirt road back to Jalalabad, we stop to take photos. Around the bend rolls a small convoy of menacing US Special Forces, all mirrored sunglasses, beards and guns. The dreamy afternoon starts to feel creepy and not safe.

The poppy revival has been linked to a decline in rural indebtedness and a rise in the status and standard of living of women.

In the central highlands of Wardak province—which along with Nangarhar is one of the top opium-producing areas in Afghanistan and set to be targeted in the upcoming American-led eradication efforts—a different group of poppy farmers explains other aspects of the trade and the process of smuggling.

Teru and I are visiting friends of his who live in a series of picturesque villages strung out along a stunningly beautiful valley—lush and green at the bottom but hemmed in by huge, dry rocky mountains.

The family we're staying with is fairly prosperous, with some brothers and cousins working in Kabul, others involved in trucking and many others farming the valley's abundantly watered land. We spend most of our time drinking tea, cracking jokes and eating. There's growing political tension around here, so our hosts allow us to take only one hike. Nor do they want too many people to see them wandering around with foreigners.

I ask the farmers here about loans, because debt is said to be one of the ways big traffickers control little farmers. "No, no. The smugglers do not lend money," says a man named Nazir. "Mostly we have to borrow from merchants in the bazaar. You have to come up with your own money." Western experts had told me the smugglers make cash loans that are repaid at 100 percent interest, but in opium instead of cash. The system in Wardak seems to be less onerous, more streamlined, less formalized. And it externalizes risk for the lenders: Farmers purchase on credit from shopkeepers to survive, then repay in cash after payment from smugglers.

"Why would the smugglers want to lend us money? They know we have to grow poppy to survive," says Nazir, sounding like he wishes he could get a cash loan instead of store credit.

"The smugglers who take the opium away have the most dangerous job, you know. They get robbed. The commanders and police can attack them. It's very dangerous," says Nazir. "The worst that happens to farmers is their crops get destroyed. And this year we lost most of our poppy to disease anyway."

Nazir and his cousins say that the smaller smugglers tend to sell their loads to wholesalers, who often work with the authorities and use official vehicles and state-issued travel documents to move their consolidated loads into Iran and Pakistan. But such cover isn't always necessary.

"The border at Chaman, in Pakistan, is wide open," says one of Nazir's cousins. "I've crossed there without talking to anyone. You just drive across."

To turn opium into heroin it must be boiled down with lye to make morphine, then further refined with other chemicals. Western counternarcotics specialists and UN researchers say that Afghan opium has typically been processed into heroin by labs in Pakistan. But with the new opium boom, these labs are said to be moving into Afghanistan, making the smuggling operations more efficient and profitable. The guys in Wardak say there are some small labs in the area around their group of villages.

"Some young people smoke heroin, about 100 of them around here. That's a big problem for us," says a man named Hazrad. He speaks English, which most of his cousins can't understand too well. "They dip cigarettes in it and just smoke it. Some of them steal to get money." When I ask how the community is dealing with this he grows reticent and uncomfortable.

According to the farmers, the route into Pakistan seems to rely heavily on concealment within other commodities like wheat and rice or in fuel tankers, and the official border crossing is used. Smuggling into Iran is usually done with long, well-armed convoys of trucks or camels that try to avoid, or if necessary outgun, any Iranian border police they might meet. Violent clashes are routine, and Tehran reports that it has lost 3,100 security personnel over the past two decades in battles with well-armed and -organized smugglers on the Afghan border. Almost 200 soldiers and 800 traffickers were killed in 2003 alone.

When I ask about US plans to target Wardak in the spring of 2005, Nazir and the others grow concerned. "We have many former Taliban and mujahedeen commanders here who are getting angry at America because of what is happening in Palestine and Iraq and because the economy here is no good," says Nazir. "Cutting down poppy will only make them more angry." Already violence is on the rise in Wardak. People who work with the occupying forces are starting to be targeted by unknown assassins.

If poppy eradication threatens instability in Afghanistan, why is the United States now stepping up its war on drugs? Officially, the counternarcotics wonks in Kabul give all the right ethical arguments: Poppy is an evil fueling everything from Islamic terrorism to the spread of HIV.

But the poppy revival has also been clearly linked to a decline in rural indebtedness and an improvement in the status and standard of living of many women. Because opium harvesting is both labor-intensive and lucrative, it provides economic opportunities for Afghan women, many of whom either cultivate poppy on their own land or work as relatively well compensated wage laborers in the fields of others. The average wage for gathering opium can be as high as $7 a day. In Kabul a day laborer who

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works on a construction site or hauls goods can expect to make only $3 a day.

And the practice of turning a blind eye to the opium industry has functioned as a de facto development strategy in Afghanistan: It is probable that ordinary Afghans receive more income from drugs than they do from all the international aid they receive.

But across the planet in Washington, Afghanistan's poppy crop is viewed through the lens of reactionary moralism and domestic political theater rather than imperial pragmatism. And now powerful politicians want a better Afghan drug war.

The first demands came in 2003, when Republican Representative Henry Hyde sent a high-profile letter to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld expressing his "growing concern about Afghanistan and the impact of illicit drugs on the fight against global terrorism."

This plea seemed to bear fruit. On a surprise visit to Kabul in August 2004, Rumsfeld singled out drugs as a problem "too serious to be ignored." In turn, the US ambassador to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, said he expected "some broadening" of the US-led coalition's military efforts against poppy.

A Western official in Kabul told me that the United States was indeed ramping up its war on drugs and building a "pretty full partnership with the UK and Afghan government." He said that economic aid of between $30 million and $40 million had already arrived and would soon be invested in antipoppy economic development, or "the alternative livelihoods program." This scheme will involve creating cold storage facilities, communications links and improved roads, all with the aim of connecting traditional crops such as apples and raisins to world markets. But even the program's proponents admit that "nothing will replace opium." This bit of carrot will then be followed by the stick: an aggressive campaign of crop eradication to begin in February.

"In 2005 eradication will be considerably more robust. At least five times as much poppy will be cut down as compared to last year," said the official, who spoke on the condition that he not be identified.

But to destroy the flowers is to destroy the lives of poor farmers. If wide and aggressive, such an assault could lead to a new jihad. Some observers have even credited the quick fall of the Taliban to the former regime's unpopular ban on poppy cultivation, a policy that left them with very few allies once the US bombs began falling.

Further complicating any real war on drugs would be the international community's open alliance with Afghanistan's mujahedeen warlords, or *jangsalaran*, many of whom might turn on the occupation if their sub rosa economic activities are attacked. As one US soldier in Kandahar explained to the English *Independent*, "We start taking out drug guys, and they will start taking out our guys." The security chief in Nangarhar, Hazrat Ali, a US ally, is said to be heavily involved in the drug trade. And now American officials have started to threaten him. "One day, he will wake up and find out he's out of business," Col. David Lamm, chief of staff for US forces in Afghanistan, said of Hazrat Ali in a recent press interview. If Hazrat Ali is targeted, it's unlikely that he'll go quietly.

Back in Wardak the impending war on poppy is viewed by the Muslim farmers as hypocritical and cruel. Just before we take leave of Nazir and his cousins, he asks me: "Why does America allow people to sell alcohol but not heroin? What is the difference? At least in Islam both are *haram*." ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

MARQUSEE REPLIES

London

■ Michael Ybarra does indeed portray the Wards as admirably principled grassroots militants, and his account of their experiences is one of his book's strengths. However, the fifteen pages concerning them (in a 763-page book) do not compensate for the overall weaknesses in his treatment of the CPUSA and the broader left. For example, it was not merely the CP but the CIO as a whole that enforced the war-time no-strike pledge and left the Wards and the workers in the lurch—but in Ybarra's account the party shoulders the bulk of the blame. His handling of "front organizations" (the National Lawyers Guild) and "fellow travelers" (Vito Marcantonio) is one-dimensional. His account of the CIO Political Action Committee of 1943–44 dwells on the role of CP personnel and says little about Sidney Hillman's own agenda. The strike wave of 1946 is dealt with in two sentences. There are pages about Lee Pressman but no references to Gastonia, Scottsboro, the Fur and Leather Workers Union, Harry Haywood, Hosea Hudson, W.E.B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes or Woody Guthrie, to name but a few.

I made clear in my review that the CPUSA was an authoritarian and sectarian outfit, that it was subordinate to Moscow and that a small number of its members engaged in espionage on behalf of the Soviet Union. Those bitter realities must be addressed, but they do not come close to justifying Ybarra's assertion that the party represented a "unique threat to American liberty"—an assertion fraught with problematic and largely unexamined historical and political assumptions, as is his use of the word "conspiracy."

To assign the party's role as a spying machine equal historical weight with its political, social and cultural roles is simply unreal. Here Ybarra, like the anti-Communists he admires, concedes too much to McCarthyism's central thesis.

Italy, India, France and Britain (where, unlike in the United States, ideologically motivated Soviet agents achieved positions of real eminence within the security apparatus) are among numerous democracies whose experience suggests that the existence of Communist parties is not inimical to "liberty." Are we being asked to believe that there's something peculiarly vulnerable about the American version?

Nothing in my review suggested that the CP could "stand in for the American left." But neither can liberal anti-Communism be made to stand in for the "non-Stalinist left." As an ideology the anti-Communism championed by Ybarra suffered from a built-in tunnel vision. It identified Communists not as political opponents but as servants of a malevolent force who had to be excluded from the circle of liberal tolerance. It placed unremitting combat with the Communist movement—conceived as a world conspiracy—at the heart of policy. That led to Vietnam and a host of cold war atrocities.

I am all for casting a withering eye on the history of the CPUSA and the left as a whole. I am also for casting a withering eye on the history of cold war liberalism—as riddled with cynical opportunism and apologetics for tyranny and mass murder as was American Stalinism.

Finally, there's no doubt that Ybarra's book aims "to disentangle anti-Communism from McCarthyism." My point was that he has not succeeded in this aim. MIKE MARQUSEE

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COMMENT

(Continued From Page 8)

parted. Vanished. The survivors are spectators at the magic show.

"My death" cannot be dealt with so easily. What Freud called my death means the world (from our point of view) comes to an end. Unimaginable, he said; my death cannot even be dreamed. There are no spectators, there is no way to distance oneself from one's own death. The passing of a hero does not occasion the end of the world, but since the hero, like Barnet or Melman or Sontag, lives within you or me in our own time, our own generation, we cannot be mere spectators at the magic show. When the hero dies it is both "my death" and not "my death"; the end of the world and not the end of the world.

What to do? Are we helpless, caught in the impossible silence of the excluded middle?

Many centuries ago, in the long darkness of the Alaskan winter, a solution was devised by the Yupiit Eskimos, the metaphysicians of the ancient common house. They said that when one among them dies, it is the beginning of a sweet, infinite journey on a beautiful underground river. But there is danger along the way. The departed person's kayak can get caught in one of the vicious currents and be trapped forever in one of the eddy pools near the riverbanks. The traveler has no power to guide the kayak. Only those who remain behind can keep the kayak in the center of the river, safe from the dangerous currents and eddies. They do this by the words they speak and the thoughts they hold about the one who has left the common house. In this way, for more than 10,000 years the Yupiit have avoided the end of the world. It is what we wish and what the heroes of our common house merit now. EARL SHORRIS

Earl Shorris is a 2000 National Humanities Medal recipient.

At the close of the old year this magazine lost three contributors, all distinguished and influential public intellectuals who brought passion and erudition to the search for a better world.

RICHARD J. BARNET

■ With Marcus Raskin he co-founded in 1963 the Institute for Policy Studies, which has produced the research and analysis that nourish campaigns for economic and social justice, environmental preservation, civil rights and disarmament. Dick Barnet brought intelligence, wide-ranging curiosity and moral commitment to his work and was a superb popularizer. According to the writer Peter Kornbluh, who had once been his research assistant, he "could take rocket science and, very very quickly, translate it into something we all could understand, appreciate, debate and mobilize around." In the 1974 book *Global Reach*, according to IPS colleague John Cavanagh, he "provided the first road map to the international corporations who drive economic globalization," framing the issues that would bring thousands into the streets in the 1990s. Today his writings in our pages read like Globalization 101. In 1994 he warned: "'Competitiveness' is the mantra of this new economy, and the winning strategies involve 'downsizing'.... About a third of the jobs in the United States are at risk to the growing productivity of low-wage workers in China, India, Mexico and elsewhere." In a 1996 article he said that "international terrorism serves as the successor myth to international Communism" and noted that "in the post–cold war world, terrorism is being privatized."

SEYMOUR MELMAN

■ A professor of industrial engineering at Columbia University, he was a thorn in the side of the military-industrial complex, exposing the false rationales and economic absurdities of the arms race. The title of one of his books—*The Permanent War Economy*—entered the progressive lexicon, along with his term "overkill." In later works he exhaustively analyzed methods of disarmament and economic conversion. In one of several articles for *The Nation*, he warned against the militarized state capitalism now dominant in America. Under it, he wrote, "the drive to expand managerial power leads to sustained international violence, as state managers bring their military assets into play"—examples being the Vietnam War (to enforce US credibility) and Gulf War I (to suppress competition from Iraqi military managers in Kuwait). Regarding that war he prophetically said that US managers' ambitions include the "establishment of large permanent bases in the Middle East to replace the Western European bases 'lost' with the wind-down of the cold war."

SUSAN SONTAG

■ In 1963, still an ingenue on the New York intellectual stage where she would later become a diva, Sontag led off a *Nation* essay with cool aplomb: "The only thing to be regretted about the close-up of limp penises and bouncing breasts, the shots of masturbation and oral sexuality, in Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures* is that it makes it hard simply to talk about this remarkable and beautiful film, one has to *defend* it." She proceeded to talk about the underground classic with eloquence, articulating the aesthetic that she expatiated on at greater length in her famous essay "Notes on Camp," one of the seminal artistic manifestoes of the 1960s. She went on to write other books and essays of profundity and originality, as well as several novels, including *The Volcano Lover*, that integrated ideas and narrative. In 1982 she stirred a sensation at a rally in New York for Poland's Solidarity movement when she criticized the left for being weak on Communism. Indeed, she said someone who had read only the *Reader's Digest* between 1950 and 1970 would have been better informed on "the realities of Communism" than a person who read only *The Nation*. Her speech was reprinted here with spirited rebuttals ("Communism and The Left," February 27, 1982). We had our occasional differences with Sontag over the years, but these faded against our admiration of her forthright stands—her work in besieged Sarajevo, her support for Israeli soldiers opposing the occupation, her stand against the political exploitation of 9/11, her opposition to the Iraq War. Her political life amply displayed moral courage, a phase she eloquently parsed here in "Courage and Resistance" (May 5, 2003).

POSTSCRIPT

■ We must also note the passing of the fearless Shirley Chisholm, the first black Congresswoman and first woman to seek the Democratic nomination for the presidency, a fighter for the poor and excluded.

• We commemorate Anthony Sampson, who wrote the authorized biography of Nelson Mandela, probed the anatomy of the British political and class system and uncovered the power of the oil oligopoly known as the "Seven Sisters." He was a friend of this magazine and instrumental in the founding of InterNation, an effort to expand our own global reach.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

And Justice for All

MICHAEL BÉRUBÉ

Affirmative action, in theory, is a matter of distributive justice, which is why liberals and progressives tend to look benevolently on it while conservatives and libertarians consider it a travesty. But in practice, does it actually advance the cause of justice in America? In some respects it has attempted to remedy the long-term effects of slavery and racial segregation; then again, programs that benefit women and recent immigrants cannot be defended on those grounds. Is it supposed to enhance "diversity" in colleges, professional schools and workplaces, or is it more specifically a set of programs for enhancing the class mobility of people who are structurally disadvantaged from birth? How can we decide whether affirmative action has been successful—and how can we decide whether affirmative action could ever be so successful as to become obsolete?

Advocates of affirmative action have three arguments at their disposal: It is a corrective for past inequality and oppression; it is a corrective for present inequality, much of which derives from past inequality and oppression; and diversity in the classroom or the workplace is not only a positive good in itself but conducive to greater social goods (a more capable global workforce and a more cosmopolitan environment in which people engage with others of different backgrounds and beliefs). Critics of affirmative action, for their part, have insisted that it is unfair to people who have never practiced race or gender discrimination; that it is counterproductive insofar as it damages the self-esteem of its beneficiaries and the public trust of institutions that practice it; and that it has deleterious consequences for society at large, because it promotes the unqualified and the incompetent over the talented and industrious.

Affirmative action in college admissions has been problematic, sometimes rewarding well-to-do immigrants over poor African-American applicants—except that all the other alternatives, like offering admission to the top 10 or 20 percent of high school graduates in a state, seem to be even worse, admitting badly underprepared kids from the top tiers of impoverished urban and rural schools while keeping out talented students who don't make their school's talented tenth. In the workplace, affirmative action has been checkered by fraud and confounded by the indeterminacy of racial identities—and yet it's so popular as to constitute business as usual for American big business, as evidenced by the sixty-eight Fortune 500 corporations, twenty-nine former high-ranking military leaders and twenty-eight broadcast media companies and organizations that filed amicus briefs in support of the University of Michigan's affirmative action programs in the recent Supreme Court cases of *Gratz v. Bollinger* and *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003).

The thorny legal and political issues affirmative action raises are made still more complex by the fact that affirmative action is inevitably recursive: The extent to which it works in practice depends considerably on our interpretations of it. Administrators and organizations that oppose it tend to be quite bad at implementing it; likewise, female and minority students and employees who are told that they are taking the places of more qualified applicants tend to doubt themselves and perform less capably than women and minorities who are told that they have every right to be right where they are.

The Pursuit of Fairness, Terry Anderson's comprehensive history of affirmative action, starts off in the 1930s, when the cause of justice is unambiguous: The bad guys wear white hoods and signs around their necks reading NO JOBS FOR NIGGERS UNTIL EVERY WHITE MAN HAS A JOB!—a slogan used by unemployed whites in Atlanta in 1930. By 1944 race relations had "progressed" to the point where 14 percent of white workers responded affirmatively to the question, "Should a Negro be

Michael Bérubé is the Paterno Family Professor in Literature at Penn State University.

IN THIS ESSAY

THE PURSUIT OF FAIRNESS: A History of Affirmative Action. By Terry H. Anderson. Oxford. 320 pp. $35.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AROUND THE WORLD: An Empirical Study. By Thomas Sowell. Yale. 239 pp. $28.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IS DEAD; LONG LIVE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION. By Faye J. Crosby. Yale. 331 pp. $30.

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your foreman or supervisor?" It was a hypothetical, since there weren't any black supervisors or any African-Americans being groomed for management positions in any integrated institutions in the public or private sector. But global conflagration has a way of transforming the national landscape: "it was the need for manpower in a total war that wounded Jim Crow," Anderson writes, and after the war, "many began to consider it fair that all taxpayers should have the opportunity to hold jobs supported by their taxes. That concept was the foundation for a policy that eventually became known as affirmative action."

Though he was hardly free of racial prejudice, Harry Truman gets his due in this history, both for the content of his character and for his exceptional political courage in desegregating the armed forces and the federal government (and provoking Strom Thurmond's Dixiecrat revolt from the Democratic Party in 1948, a campaign still recalled fondly by certain prominent Southerners). Still, progress was glacial, even measured by the very slowest glaciers on the globe: Though the federal government had hired African-American employees and soldiers in unprecedented numbers (by 1962 African-Americans were 13 percent of the federal workforce, 20 percent of the post office and a third of the General Services Administration), and though the Supreme Court had delivered its decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, most of the country was still partying like it was 1899. In 1963, *Ebony* magazine noted, "two of 3,500 apprentices in all trades in Newark are Negro and in Chicago, where a quarter of the population is Negro, the apprentice figure is less than 1 percent." In 1964, in Holly Bluff, Mississippi, school officials spent $190 for every white student and $1.26 (note the decimal point) for every black one. As Anderson sums up, the pace of black hiring in the 1950s meant that "minorities could not expect jobs proportionate to their percentage of the population...among business managers and owners until 2730." As Satchel Paige might have said, don't look back—some glacier might be gaining on you.

That was the world in which the 1964 Civil Rights Act intervened; that was the world changed by JFK's creation of the Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, Congress's passage of the Voting Rights Act and LBJ's executive order 11246, which dictated that "the contractor will take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed, and that employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, creed, color, or national origin." Up to this point, affirmative action is simply a matter of chipping away at the ossified and obsessive American version of apartheid. "But then," Anderson writes, "the next question: If the government had outlawed discrimination against African Americans, how could it encourage, even demand, that employers *begin* hiring a race that traditionally had suffered discrimination?"

From that question, Anderson takes us on what is by now a familiar bumpy ride, past Nixon's "goals and timetables" and the controversial "Philadelphia Plan" to integrate trade unions and the municipal civil services. *Griggs v. Duke Power Co.* (1971) establishes the principle of "disparate impact" under Title VII; minority "set-asides" are created by the Nixon-era US Small Business Administration Section 8(a). These are followed by the mid-1970s backlash, the era of Nathan Glazer's *Affirmative Discrimination* and the American Federation of Teachers and B'nai B'rith amicus briefs for Allan Bakke. Meanwhile, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission grows teeth, issues new regulations for the hiring of women and wins back pay for race and gender discrimination at AT&T and Bethlehem Steel. In 1981 Reagan takes office with an all-white Cabinet save for Samuel Pierce, the black Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, whom the President often fails to recognize and who rarely shows up for his job; the EEOC entertains a handful of preposterous cases, filed by genuine troublemakers and incompetents; minority set-asides are abused by front organizations, Cuban émigrés, wealthy immigrants and well-connected white women. Then comes the first wave of affirmative action layoffs, as white civil servants with twenty years' seniority are canned while recently hired blacks and Latinos are spared; by 1989, *Griggs*—and the principle of "disparate impact"—is overturned by the Supreme Court, and in 1991 Congress passes a new Civil Rights Act and the Senate confirms Justice Clarence Thomas. Four years later Bill Clinton says, "mend it, don't end it" after conducting an extensive review of all federal programs, and set-asides are eliminated by *Adarand v. Peña*. California and Washington pass state referendums abolishing affirmative action, students and conservative organizations file suits against the Universities of Texas and Michigan, and finally we reach the present, still trying to understand what remains of the righteous social crusade launched sixty years ago.

Until the civil rights era, racial progress in the United States was glacial, even measured by the very slowest glaciers in the world.

So what do Americans really think of affirmative action? It depends on how you pose the question. In 2003, Anderson reports, "opinion polls found that Americans approved 2 to 1 of 'programs designed to increase the number of black and minority students'; the same people disapproved 3 to 1 of 'giving preferential treatment' to minorities and that included a *majority* of minority respondents." At the end of two generations' debate about racial and social justice, it would seem, Americans emphatically approve of affirmative action programs, even as they passionately oppose any race or gender "preferences" that would make affirmative action programs work.

Thomas Sowell, a prominent black conservative sociologist at the Hoover Institution, has been arguing against affirmative action for more than thirty years, and in *Affirmative Action Around the World*, a couple of Sowell's arguments are incontrovertible. He's right, for example, that "no historic sufferings of blacks in the United States can justify preferential benefits to white women or to recently arrived immigrants from Asia or Latin America who happen to be nonwhite, but whose ancestors obviously never suffered any discrimination in the United States." He cites the federal largesse showered upon the Fanjul family of Cuban émigrés, who possess "a fortune exceeding $500 million" (but then so does Anderson, in the course of acknowledging that affirmative action, like any system, can be gamed by unscrupulous players). And Sowell is right that the implementation of affirmative action in the United States since the mid-1960s has gone well beyond the race-neutral language of the Civil Rights Act and LBJ's executive order 11246.

But Sowell is not content with merely plausible arguments; he wants to insist, by way of surveys of India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Nigeria, that "quotas and preferences" can lead to mass murder and civil war, as when Sri Lankan Sinhalese attempted to marginalize the dominant Sri Lankan Tamils by means of punitive quotas, and Tamils fought back with protests and guerrilla war, or when Malays instituted such a draconian set of "racial preferences" as to provoke an exodus of high-skilled Chinese

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from Malaysia. At times Sowell has the honesty to admit that he has no idea whether these "affirmative action" programs are the cause of all the civil unrest he documents: "If it is difficult to isolate the effects of preferences and quotas, as such, on Nigeria's troubled history, it is much clearer that the group polarization which preceded and produced the preferences and quotas has been deadly in its effects." But this is like saying that it's not clear whether we should attribute "race-related violence" in the United States to affirmative action or to slavery and segregation: While it's difficult to isolate the impact of affirmative action on America's troubled history, there's no denying that the group polarization that preceded and produced affirmative action—segregation, Jim Crow, lynching—has been deadly in its effects.

Yet when Sowell finally gets to discussing the United States, it turns out that affirmative-action-inspired mass murder and civil war are the least of our worries. Never mind that the quota systems of Nigeria and Malaysia have never been enacted here; never mind that while India has extended its terribly amorphous category of "backward classes," the United States has backed away from controversial practices like set-asides and race-norming. For Sowell, affirmative action in America is literally a question of life and death, as illustrated by the case of Patrick Chavis, a black man admitted to the medical school of the University of California, Davis, the same school that rejected Allan Bakke. For years, the liberal affirmative action establishment touted Chavis, as Sowell notes: "The Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights made the usual comparison between Chavis and Bakke—to Chavis' advantage—in 1997, just two weeks before the Medical Board of California suspended Chavis' license to practice medicine in the wake of a suspicious death of one of his patients."

For Sowell, Chavis clinches the argument: "the role of academic institutions is not to play God in judging individual souls. It is, among other things, to see that people like Patrick Chavis do not end up with scalpels in their hands and 'M.D.' after their names to lure unsuspecting patients to their deaths." And Chavis is "not an isolated example"; on the contrary, Chavises have infected the system at every level, corrupting American meritocracy and placing us all at risk:

> In other fields as well, it is the ignored third parties who have the biggest stake in what institutions of higher learning do and how well they do it. Applicants for engineering schools do not have nearly as large a stake as those millions of other people whose lives depend on the quality of the engineering that goes into the bridges they drive across or the planes they fly in or the equipment they work with.

Be afraid. Be very afraid. Affirmative action does not merely lead to mass murder and civil war—that's just for starters. Before long, bridges will collapse and planes will plummet from the sky, and every time they do you'll know that some incompetent affirmative action hire is to blame.

Why, then, has the private sector gradually embraced affirmative action, with all these incompetent minorities eating away at our social infrastructure? Here's Sowell's stab at an explanation:

> Court decisions legitimizing affirmative action under prescribed conditions then provided businesses with a set of guidelines that could minimize their legal jeopardy. Therefore, when efforts were made to end group preferences and quotas during the 1980s by some within the Reagan administration, big business support for the continuation of affirmative action helped doom the efforts to rescind it.

What in the world does "therefore" mean in this passage? Sure, minimal "legal jeopardy" is good, but wouldn't no legal jeopardy be better? Dodging this question, Sowell then writes, "In addition, large corporations tend to have their own internal affirmative action officials and departments, with their own vested interests in the continuation of such policies." Aha, those vested interests. The idea that large corporations might not want to be seen as racist or sexist employers, like the idea that large corporations really mean it when they say that affirmative action has given them a deeper pool of efficient employees, seems never to have crossed Sowell's mind.

What social scientists will find most puzzling—or galling—about Sowell's book, though, is his dogged insistence that affirmative action has never been tested empirically, that there are no studies of its effects, no cost/benefit analyses of its policies. Faye Crosby's latest work, *Affirmative Action Is Dead; Long Live Affirmative Action*, provides a compact, ready-to-hand rebuttal of claims like these, crammed as it is with studies, surveys, assessments and a battery of psychological and attitudinal tests. At the same time, Crosby's book might also stand as an index of the naïveté of some of the people devising those tests. She repeatedly professes bewilderment at opposition to affirmative action: "Why, I wonder, has affirmative action in employment and education not been universally and vigorously supported in the United States?"

Perhaps Crosby's profession of puzzlement is merely for rhetorical effect, but it's hard to imagine how any researcher could wonder aloud why white guys, who'd once competed for college placements, jobs and promotions with about 44 percent of the population, might resist policies that put them in competition with the other 60 percent. And Crosby seems to think that many people oppose affirmative action largely because they're misinformed about it: "For some time I have had no doubt that much of the resistance to affirmative action is based on misconceptions about the policy.... The policy implications of this conclusion would seem to be clear. Just teach people how affirmative action really operates, and the controversy will die down." Really? Crosby herself seems unsure of this. Although she says that for many Republicans and libertarians, "opposition to policies that resemble affirmative action derives more from a dislike of government intervention than from racial prejudice," she also concedes that "for overt and covert racists

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and sexists, the knowledge that affirmative action benefits those who have been previously excluded or oppressed may be what bothers them about the policy." But I doubt any of this is news in 2005. At the close of her book, Crosby proposes experiments that test people's support for affirmative action relative to their ideas about justice, but it's a mystery to me why she didn't devise those experiments and conduct them herself.

Then again, thanks to Crosby, I've gotten the distinct sense that such tests are part of the problem: She cites—and has conducted—study after study in which people are asked whether they approve of Company X, which gives "slight preferences for qualified women and ethnic minorities," or Company Y, which gives "strong preferences to qualified women and ethnic minorities, even if we must turn away better qualified or more highly skilled non-minority applicants." And guess what? In study after study, people approve of Company X's policies but not Company Y's—without being told that, as a matter of fact, Company Y's policies are illegal in the United States. On the one hand, this result suggests that more people would support affirmative action if they knew what it does and does not entail; on the other hand, it suggests that these very tests may be muddying rather than clarifying the issue. Perhaps it is no wonder that so many Americans believe affirmative action involves precisely the kind of racial quotas and set-asides that have been struck down by courts time and again; to gauge by studies like these, professional psychologists and sociologists have managed to spread disinformation about affirmative action as effectively as a whole think tank full of Sowells.

As Anderson points out at the close of *The Pursuit of Fairness*, the nation's demographics will render affirmative action increasingly troublesome in the next quarter-century, not only because the sons and daughters of the new African-American professional class are now entering colleges and workplaces but also because integration and immigration have produced something like a melting pot or a glorious mosaic or a dead metaphor of hybrid hyphenated identities. This outcome has further complicated a system that, as Nathan Glazer (who recently recast himself as a supporter of affirmative action) has remarked, already grants affirmative action status to people from Argentina and Spain but not Brazil or Portugal, and considers everyone from the Middle East to be white.

But our confusions are not simply demographic. As Scott Jaschik reported last summer in the *Boston Globe*, "The University of Michigan released enrollment figures for next fall showing that the number of black students in its freshman class would be declining by as much as 13 percent. That same day, Texas A&M University—a school that refuses to consider race or ethnicity in admissions—announced its own numbers for the fall. Enrollment would be going up—dramatically—for all minority groups, including a whopping 57 percent increase for black students." Apparently, Michigan's response to *Gratz v. Bollinger* produced a more complex application process that contributed to an overall 18 percent drop in applications; meanwhile, Texas A&M, an all-white school until 1963, announced earlier this year that it would abolish "legacy" admissions and began recruiting low-income students from urban areas. Clearly, Texas A&M sent somebody the right signal about race and justice, while Michigan is left to explore the imponderables of unintended consequences. And if the history of affirmative action is any guide, all we will be able to predict about the experiment is that both its intended and unintended results will surprise us—and compel us to think again, and yet again, about how best to foster justice for all. ■

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Infinite Jest

BENJAMIN PALOFF

BACACAY. By Witold Gombrowicz. Translated by Bill Johnston. Archipelago. 275 pp. $26.

POLISH MEMORIES. By Witold Gombrowicz. Translated by Bill Johnston. Yale. 191 pp. $24.

A GUIDE TO PHILOSOPHY IN SIX HOURS AND FIFTEEN MINUTES. By Witold Gombrowicz. Translated by Benjamin Ivry. Yale. 109 pp. $22.

This past March, on the closing day of an international literary conference held in Krakow, Poland, an elderly woman stood up before hundreds of scholars and admirers gathered to mark the 100th birthday of Witold Gombrowicz and made a plucky confession that produced nervous titters around the regal lecture hall. She had read all of Gombrowicz's works, she said, and hadn't understood a word. She had read a great deal of the voluminous criticism about Gombrowicz, most of which is still produced in his native country, and hadn't gotten anything out of that, either. And then, hoping for some clarification, she had listened patiently to more than seventy presentations at this weeklong conference, but to no avail. So, she asked, can anyone explain what the deal is with Witold Gombrowicz?

It's a reasonable question, and even more so in North America, where this writer is better known by reputation than by his work. Gombrowicz, who died in France in 1969, was the author of stylistically innovative and philosophically challenging prose, and he has gradually slipped into the ranks of the cultural powerhouses of modern Europe. That is, Gombrowicz has become one of those names—like Robert Walser or Hermann Broch—usually incanted by those who are in the know to assert their intellectual superiority over those who are not.

Fortunately, help is on the way. Three new translations—the story collection *Bacacay*, the memoir *Polish Memories* and his self-descriptive *Guide to Philosophy in Six Hours and Fifteen Minutes*—not only fill in major gaps in Gombrowicz's body of work in English; they provide hope that for the first time it may be possible for those lacking fluency in Polish to enjoy this singular talent for all that he is. Because great as Gombrowicz's reputation has been among the anointed few, as loudly as his praises have been sung by the likes of Susan Sontag and John Updike, as much as the denizens of smoky art cafes have called him a forerunner of every current in twentieth-century thought, from existentialism to body theory, something has been missing from his Anglophone existence. Gombrowicz is all these things, but he is also something immeasurably greater: He is brilliantly, savagely funny—a philosophical, stylistic and comic genius in one.

Appropriately, Gombrowicz's biography reads like one man's meditation on history retold as a cruel joke. In the 1930s he made a name for himself in Poland by using his irreverent fiction to skewer his compatriots' aristocratic pretensions, first in a collection of stories titled *Recollections of Adolescence*, and then in his 1937 masterpiece, *Ferdydurke*, whose idiosyncratic, rhythmic prose jumps nimbly between disparate registers of diction and emotion, producing an effect that is by turns hypnotic and unsettling. In 1939, already a rising literary star, Gombrowicz accepted an offer to sail to Argentina on the maiden voyage of a transatlantic ocean liner. Less than two weeks after his arrival in Buenos Aires, Germany invaded Poland, and Gombrowicz was stuck in South America, penniless, with barely a word of Spanish. To eke out a meager living, he had to rely on a community of Polish expatriates who tended to be even more conservative than the conservatives he'd gladly left behind in his native land. In 1953 Gombrowicz published *Trans-Atlantyk*, a blistering account of his first years in exile retold as a kind of Chaucerian farce. But this description is unlikely to resonate with readers whose sole contact with Gombrowicz is the novel's uneven 1994 English translation, which inadvertently drained his prose of much of its wit and vigor.

Translation has been the greatest stumbling block in introducing Gombrowicz to an American audience. Gombrowicz is that rare writer in whom the weight of a powerful intellect is leavened by both linguistic daring and an infectious sense of whimsy. These latter two features have proven the most difficult to render in English. With the exception of Lillian Vallée's translation of his fascinating (and largely fictitious) three-volume *Diary*, most English translations have been at least partially tone-deaf: They either fail to grasp the energy of his Polish (some have been done from French or German translations rather than the original Polish) or they fail to reproduce that artistry in our language. With the first complete translation of *Bacacay*—an expanded version of *Recollections of Adolescence*, published in 1957—this major European talent is finally ours to enjoy.

Taken as a whole, the twelve stories in *Bacacay* read like a catalogue of tyranny in its gloriously variegated forms. In the first story, "Lawyer Kraykowski's Dancer," a well-to-do attorney tries to impose his sense of good manners on everyone around him, including the narrator. In "The Rat" a retired judge seeks out the perfect means of torture for a bandit who has brought too much "expansive exuberance" to the neighborhood. The protagonist of "Dinner at Countess Pavahoke's," who tells us at the outset that "I often spend long hours discussing beautiful and exalted topics," is devastated when, instead of the refined company he expects, he finds himself at the Dinner Party from Hell. And in "Virginity" we encounter Alice, who requires constant vigilance to preserve her delicate, maidenly nature:

> The life of an adolescent girl can be compared neither with the life of an engineer or lawyer, nor with the life of a housewife and mother. Take, for instance, the longing and murmuring of the blood, perpetual as the ticking of a watch. Somewhere the idea was already once expressed that there is nothing stranger than being alluring. It's not easy to look after a being whose reason for existing is to entice; yet Alice was well-protected by her canary Fifi, by her mother, the major's wife, and by her Doberman pinscher Bibi, whom she led on a leash during their afternoon walk. These domestic animals had a curious understanding when it came to Alice's protection. "Bibi," sang the canary, "Bibi, you sweet dog, guard our young lady well. Bow and scrape to her! Bow and scrape! And drive away bad thoughts. Keep an eye on the parasol—it's so lazy; make sure it shields our beloved young lady from the sun!"

Tyranny permeates these stories, a thread that would run through all of Gombrowicz's work. Lambasted by conservative critics for

Benjamin Paloff writes regularly on poetry for Boston Review.

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the supposed "immaturity" of these stories, he went on to write *Ferdydurke*, which depicts the identity crisis of an author who, lambasted for the "immaturity" of his first book, is abducted by his old schoolmaster and whisked away to the classroom, where he must relive all the shamefulness of adolescence. For Gombrowicz, tyranny plagues every human interaction: What we call "culture" itself amounts to a tyranny of the majority (an Enlightenment fear now taken oddly as a mark of political good fortune). Even when we are alone, tyranny is with us, in our bodies, our desires, in our inability to escape from ourselves.

More than a half-century before the humiliation-driven humor of Jerry Seinfeld and Larry David, Gombrowicz explored the ways in which being asked to behave creates an irrepressible need to misbehave. In "The Banquet" the ministers of state are dumbfounded not only by the king's corruption (Who is ever really dumbfounded by the king's corruption?) but by his wanton assault on propriety:

> No less than a *bribe* was being demanded by the bribe-taker in the crown in return for his participation in the banquet. And all at once the king began to complain that these were hard times, that it wasn't clear how one could make ends meet...after which he giggled...he giggled and winked confidentially at the chancellor and minister of state...he winked and then giggled again...he giggled and poked him in the side with his finger.

The fun of *Bacacay*—and it is not merely a pleasure, but fun—is in watching how these tyrannies fold back into and against themselves. The maidenly Alice is overcome by a need to crouch down next to a stray dog and gnaw at a bone. The hero of "Lawyer Kraykowski's Dancer" turns the tables on the snooty attorney, inserting himself into his life, interfering whenever possible in his walks and his love affair, even paying for his daily pastries in advance as an assault on his independence, explaining to us by way of analogy: "Imagine the lawyer coming out of a public lavatory, reaching for fifteen groszy, and being told that it had already been paid. What does he feel at such a moment?"

In this regard, those who have described Gombrowicz's writing as "absurdist" have shot wide of the mark. His ideas are strikingly consistent, and their consequences deadly serious, even if his chosen mode of expression is anything but solemn. As Gombrowicz puts it in *Polish Memories*, "It's possible to be perfectly aware of all the worthlessness of our inflammable credulity, and also of the utter severity of life, and at the same time to hold firmly to what one considers to be important values."

Given his fondness for adopting masks and playing the spoiler even in his "nonfiction" works, *Polish Memories* features some of the author's most direct, unadulterated comments on life and literature before the war forced him into exile. "Adulteration" is one of the hallmarks of Gombrowicz's work, and admirers of his boisterous style will be disappointed by the sober, judicious prose of these autobiographical sketches, composed in the late 1950s for Radio Free Europe. At the same time, readers unfamiliar with Polish cultural history may find themselves lost in a sea of names of poets and politicians and the cafes they frequented. Still, *Polish Memories* merits a place among those easily overlooked books that glow ever brighter the more the reader brings to the table. It will be most enjoyable for those who have read Gombrowicz's fiction, and who will appreciate his euphoria when *Ferdydurke* was praised by his friend the lyrical short-story writer and artist Bruno Schulz, who earlier had been lukewarm to the project: "A miracle occurred," Gombrowicz writes. "In the course of a single day I received several telegrams from

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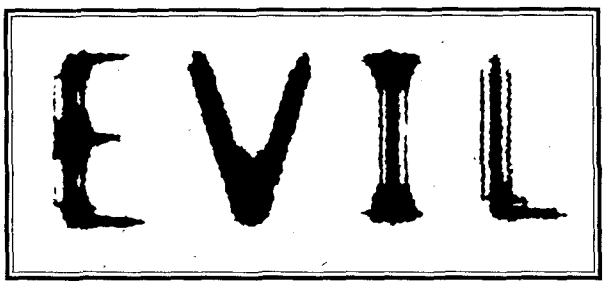

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him—because as he read, he kept running to the post office to send me new compliments." But the book also has a great deal to offer anyone who shares his loathing of cultural self-importance and aristocratic vanity. "When your neighbors religiously show you the signet ring of their great-grandfather," he remarks, "you can assume that in the present day the family has gone to the dogs, since they're so impressed by the past."

Bill Johnston, a veteran translator of Polish literature, has faithfully rendered both *Bacacay* and *Polish Memories* into English. This is an accomplishment in itself, especially in the case of *Bacacay*, in which Gombrowicz jumps quickly from the pinched tones of lords and ladies to the frenetic pace of narrators on the verge of mental and physical collapse. One occasionally wishes that Johnston had been bolder in reproducing the linguistic playfulness of Gombrowicz's stories, since the prose here sometimes sounds too much like that of the deliberately straightforward *Polish Memories*. Such quibbles aside, this version of *Bacacay* nevertheless raises the bar for all Gombrowicz translations and makes an excellent introduction for readers new to his tragicomic world.

A Guide to Philosophy in Six Hours and Fifteen Minutes is an entirely different kind of text—call it Advanced Gombrowicz—and we should pity the poor soul who stumbles upon this slim volume while looking for a Cliffs Notes summary to Western thought. Never intended for publication, the book consists of notes Gombrowicz wrote in French during the last year of his life at the request of his wife and of his close friend, the journalist Dominique de Roux, who hoped to distract him from his progressing illness and thoughts of suicide. In this able translation by Benjamin Ivry, we see Gombrowicz musing on some of Europe's major philosophers, among them Kant, Schopenhauer, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Sartre, Heidegger and Marx. Originally composed for two intelligent nonspecialists, these reflections reveal, not surprisingly, more about their author than about his subjects. His interpretations are, to say the least, idiosyncratic. He writes, for instance, that Schopenhauer is not a pessimist but that he simply has "a grandiose and tragic vision, which, unfortunately, coincides perfectly with reality," and that "our will to live forces us to consume others or to be consumed by them." (What would a real pessimist be, one wonders.) Nietzsche, he declares, has "the nerves of Shelley, the stomach of Carlyle, and the soul of a young lady." Then again, he also warns us, "To tell the truth, in philosophy, one cannot say anything."

Even this admission, however, should be taken with a grain of salt. Not because Gombrowicz necessarily believes that one *can* say things in philosophy but because most of his work suggests that "to tell the truth" is an impossibility in itself. For this master of fiction and semi-fiction, history, culture and personal interactions elude our convenient definitions, and thank heavens, since life is difficult enough without somebody else telling us who we are and what we mean.

The publication of these three books helps mark 2004 as "The Year of Gombrowicz," as it was officially designated by the Polish government. The international conference held last March in Krakow was the largest of several such gatherings in Poland, France and the United States. But the idea of an international conference honoring Gombrowicz is ironic, even oxymoronic, since the author openly ridiculed the worship of cultural greatness. Hour after hour, translators and editors heaped praises on him, and scholars (myself included) stimulated each other's minds with various attempts to dissect his work. But the most fitting tribute to Gombrowicz was paid by the brave woman who stood up when all was said and done and confessed to her own incurable incomprehension. She was reminding us that, with the Polish master, nothing is definite or explicable, let alone sacred. Try as we might to arbitrate worldly meaning, whether through exclusionary jargon, demonstrations of good taste or appeals to "moral values," the joke is always on us. ■

FILMS

Before Night Falls

STUART KLAWANS

MACHUCA • HEAD-ON

The Chilean coup of 1973 was carried out with a Lone Ranger comic book, a bicycle and several cans of condensed milk. Other equipment, including rifles, also figured in the event; but according to Andrés Wood's surprising new feature film, *Machuca*, the military hardware remained mostly on the outskirts of consciousness.

It seems the condensed milk played its major role during the run-up to the coup. Silvana, a wild girl of the shantytowns, used to extort this treat from 11-year-old Gonzalo, a chubby, piglet-nosed rich boy whom she repaid with her lactose-sweetened kisses. The bicycle was Gonzalo's means of getting to her: pedaling from his fancy neighborhood in Santiago to Silvana's tumbledown district beside the Mapocho River. Once there, he could hang out happily with her and with his sole friend, Pedro Machuca, a charity student at Gonzalo's upper-class, English-language boys' school. As for the beautifully hardbound comic book that Gonzalo shared with Pedro, it turned out to pose a challenge. If the Lone Ranger and Tonto could ride together, then why shouldn't lasting friendship take hold between a poor and distinctly Indian-looking kid like Pedro and a soft, strawberry-haired freckle-face?

The answer: On September 11, 1973, military jets attacked the presidential palace in Santiago, ushering in the Pinochet dictatorship.

Machuca is hardly the first movie to filter great events such as these through the minds of children. You're familiar with the trope; and you may guess, going in, that class divisions will ultimately overpower boyish affinity. The movie's effect therefore depends on your feelings about these particular children, and about the specific objects—bicycle, condensed milk, comic book—that rule their imaginative lives.

The effect is that of a slow-acting drug. For a long time everything feels normal. Then you get a little tingly. And then, all at once, the world rearranges itself.

This is to say that Wood first establishes an intimate scale, beginning with close-ups of Gonzalo (Matias Quer) putting on his uniform for Saint Patrick's School—the white shirt, the tie, the jacket. Soon after, Gonzalo meets the handful of poor boys whom the liberationist headmaster, Father McEnroe, is now determined to toss in among the wealthy. At once, you notice

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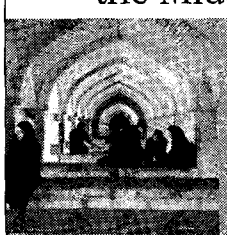

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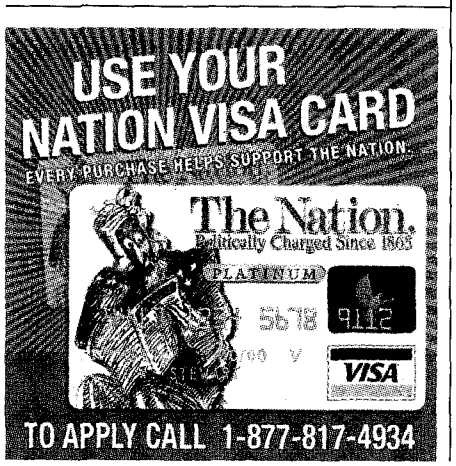

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that Pedro (Ariel Mateluna) has a hole in his sweater. It's not the biggest hole you've ever seen; the camera doesn't drop into it; but given the film's sartorial setup, it registers as strongly as Pedro's tense posture, or his reluctance to speak to Father McEnroe in a tone above a whisper. A small directorial gesture—but it will have devastating echoes by the end of the film, when the separate fates of the boys are decided by a pair of American-brand sneakers.

By that point, of course, Wood also will have established a larger scale, as seen in his re-creations of the street demonstrations of the early 1970s. Though impressive for their size, their period detail and the mere fact of having been shot in Santiago, these scenes are most memorable for the private joy that Gonzalo finds in them. He tags along to the rallies with Pedro and Silvana (Manuela Martelli), who hawk flags without prejudice to all demonstrators—one set for the nationalists, another for the socialists—but nevertheless let out a little nonprofessional enthusiasm when the crowd's for Allende. It's at one of these latter gatherings that Gonzalo, teased into action by Silvana, begins to jump up and down with the pack. The way he smiles then, with his hair flopping around his face and his school uniform coming undone, you realize he'd never before thought he could get off the ground, even for a second, or that he could find himself flanked in mid-air by two friends.

At such moments, *Machuca* seems to open outward with Gonzalo's discovery of a bigger world in which to move about—a discovery that's matched by Pedro's wonder at everything he sees in Gonzalo's home. (You have a *staircase*? It goes *up*?) The tragedy of *Machuca* is that all this will soon be shut down, with a bang.

And the art of *Machuca*? I'd say it lies in the modesty of the approach, despite those period re-creations. Wood and his co-writers, Roberto Brodsky and Mamoun Hassan, perhaps exaggerate only in creating the character of Gonzalo's mother, a slim and adulterous clothes-horse who contrasts too neatly with the fierce but candid Silvana. Aline Kuppenheim, a soap-opera star in Chile, gives a credibly restrained performance as the mother; but even so, I found myself remembering the hysterics of Téa Leoni in *Spanglish*, as she went about embodying all the sins of her class. Kuppenheim, too, becomes an allegorical figure by the end of the movie. I'm sure Santiago de Chile in 1973 had plenty of women this wealthy, this casually brutal, this manipulative yet chaotic in their sexuality; but it's still a mistake for *Machuca*

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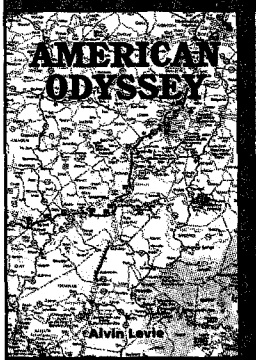

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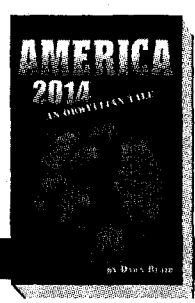

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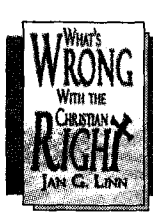

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to reduce a person to the status of condensed milk.

But maybe I'm the one who's exaggerating, since my complaint merely points up the extraordinary consistency of tone of *Machuca*. It's an insidiously unforced movie, never drawing attention to its own cleverness, always investing meaning and tension into its details, until the moment when Gonzalo hears two jets zoom overhead and then sees, far off in the distance, a little plume of smoke. No more jumping up and down for this boy; no more friends.

Machuca begins its US theatrical run at New York's Film Forum, January 19, and will also be shown on the Cinema Tropical distribution circuit. In Chile, it was last year's number-two film at the box office and now, astonishingly, will represent the country as its official entry for the Academy Awards.

The Turkish-German actor Birol Ünel talks as if he had a larynx full of ground glass. He walks around half-blind because of the greasy locks draped over his right eye. He does not clean up real nice; his face, when shaved, reacts with shock, as if his skin wanted to recoil from the fresh air. We Americans cannot understand him. Only certain Europeans, the ones who believe Nick Cave is a profound artist, vibrate to the basso thrum of Birol Ünel.

I can see, though, why the writer-director Fatih Akin cast him as a man who deliberately drives his car smack into a wall.

Ünel is the hero, if you can call him that, of Akin's aptly titled *Head-On*, which would deserve your attention if only because of the success it has already won. The film took the top prize at the 2004 Berlin Film Festival, went on to score five German Academy Awards and finished the year by claiming the European Film Award. I caught the picture at the Museum of Modern Art's "Premieres" series, in advance of its mid-January theatrical release, and can testify that I was intermittently amused and never bored, despite the full two-hour running time. That said, I'm most interested in *Head-On* for what it suggests about its audience's sensibility.

To Nick Cavean romance of self-destruction and cosmopolitan anomie, *Head-On* now adds a dash of Oriental flavor, both savory and sour. Cahit (Ünel), a janitor in a Hamburg nightclub, meets cute with Sibel (Sibel Kekilli) in a state hospital for the flamboyantly suicidal. He has recently had his late-night encounter with the wall, just because it was there; and she has slashed her wrists, to suggest to her tradition-bound family that she would prefer to live like a secular European. "Are you Turkish? Marry me," she says to Cahit by way of introduction. There will be no sex and no obligations on his part; he'll hardly even know she's around. All she requires of him is the protective cover of a Turkish husband. Sibel is twenty years younger than Cahit, has the serenely elongated face of a Modigliani painting and offers to show "the most wonderful tits you've ever seen." (The promise, of course, is really being made to the audience; and given the European art-house tradition to which *Head-On* adheres, Sibel will keep her word.) Despite these stipulations, or perhaps because of them, Cahit turns her down, until she persuades him with a fresh wrist-opening.

For much of the next hour, *Head-On* plays for laughs, as Cahit carries out his woefully inadequate imposture, grumbles about the transformation of his apartment ("It's like a chick bomb went off in here," he mutters, after the crumpled beer cans disappear from the sink) and of course falls in love with his wife, who remains untouchably within arm's reach and is oblivious to his feelings, hidden as they are beneath a thick layer of scabs. This material is maybe a little rougher than what Americans are used to getting, either in today's comedy clubs or in yesterday's movies about generational conflict on the Lower East Side, but it's conventional enough—pleasing and well done, but familiar. I would guess, though, that it's novel to European audiences, who are still struggling to assimilate the fact that Muslims of Turkish background are born in their countries, speak their languages and aren't going away.

Except there's a twist in *Head-On*. Sibel and Cahit *are* going away.

The film's second hour, which is not played for laughs, has Sibel cutting off her hair and going to Istanbul, where she switches to a more thrashing mode of self-destruction, similar to her husband's. What Cahit is doing for most of this time, you don't need to learn from me. It's enough to say that the characters are soaked in blood, more often than not, and eventually discover they have two countries in which they don't feel at home.

To me, this enforced glumness became irritating; but then, I'm an American. I expect fantasies of immigration and acculturation to involve playacting, lovemaking and guarded optimism; whereas Europeans, of whatever background, have apparently found those qualities to be the surprise in *Head-On*, and the abjection of the second act to be the expected and necessary payoff. In fact, in a canned interview, Fatih Akin has revealed that he originally planned the film's ending to be happier, along the lines of a comedy of remarriage. Then the need for loss and misery pressed itself upon him—and very successfully, too, given the film's record to date.

Framing the action, by the way, are performances of traditional Turkish songs by the Romany band of Selim Sesler, featuring Idil Üner as vocalist. Shot on location before a picture-postcard view of Istanbul, the musical numbers provide both ironic commentary and much-needed leavening for the story. I would recommend *Head-On* if only for them—and, of course, for the three minutes of comedy that Akin wrings out of the question of whether a gift box of chocolates contains any liquor. ■

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ORGANIZATIONS

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?—The American Political Crisis Express your viewpoint with Boston West Suburban *Nation* Discussion Group, first meeting Sunday, January 16, 1:30–3 PM, First Parish UU Church, Harrington Room, 50 Church Street, Waltham, MA 02452. Hans Rosdolsky, (781) 893-2186, hgrosdol@verizon.net.

PHILANTHROPY

PHILANTHROPISTS, HELP INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES. Please contact: H.O.F.S. P.O. Box 459, Tillamook, OR 97141.

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END THE DRUG WAR: See www.CommonSenseDrugPolicy.org, www.DrugWarFacts.org, www.DRCNet.org, www.MedicalMJ.org, www.DrugSense.org, www.AddictInTheFamily.org.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

WEB EDITOR WANTED. *The Nation* seeks a full-time web editor with progressive politics, boundless energy and a strong commitment to help amplify the influence and scope of the magazine's online presence. The web editor will work closely with magazine editors as well as business staffers in developing the site. Major responsibilities include planning, creating and implementing new *Nation* online features; conceiving and executing the creation of online enhancements to articles originating from the print magazine; assisting in outreach to other online media; coordinating breaking online news coverage; and editing original *Nation* online articles. Ideal candidate has at least three years' experience working at a political website; closely follows the news media—print, broadcast and online—has broad familiarity with the progressive community; keeps abreast of alternative and youth culture; works well with a wide array of individuals, internal departments and outside organizations; and is comfortable with very tight deadline pressure. Familiarity with HTML, online production and content management a plus. Applicant must work in *The Nation*'s New York City office. Position offers generous benefits and a convivial work atmosphere. *The Nation* is an equal opportunity employer; people of color and other minorities strongly encouraged to apply. E-mail résumé, cover letter and salary requirements to: webjob@thenation.com. No calls, please.

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION: Miami Workers Center seeks self-starting administrative/finance/HR professional with at least five years' managerial experience. The Director of Administration and Finance (DAF) directs human resource, finance, administrative and special-event functions of the organization. The DAF is a member of the Center's Management Team and reports directly to the Executive Director. The position is full time with weekend and evening work. Salary is commensurate with experience, $35–40K. Includes: medical, sick leave, personal days and paid vacation. Résumé and letter to pat@theworkerscenter.org. Info: www.miamiworkerscenter.org.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

NATION STUDENT OUTREACH: Attention student activists! If you're involved in organizing a progressive event, lecture or film festival on your campus or in your community and would like to distribute copies of *The Nation*, please let us know by calling (212) 209-5416.

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DC/MD/VA PYCHOLOGIST, progressive approaches, thirty-four years' experience, aac-counselingassociates.com, Sliding scale, (301) 229-0044.

NEW YORK THERAPIST, twenty years' clinical and university-based experience. Separation and divorced parenting; divorced fathers. Individual, family and group. Bill Dineen, LCSW, (917) 566-4785.

FAIRFIELD, CT, Yale-trained clinical psychologist/psychoanalyst, twenty-five years' experience. Depression, anxiety, relationship issues. Insurance accepted. Linda Ludwig, PhD, (203) 256-9788.

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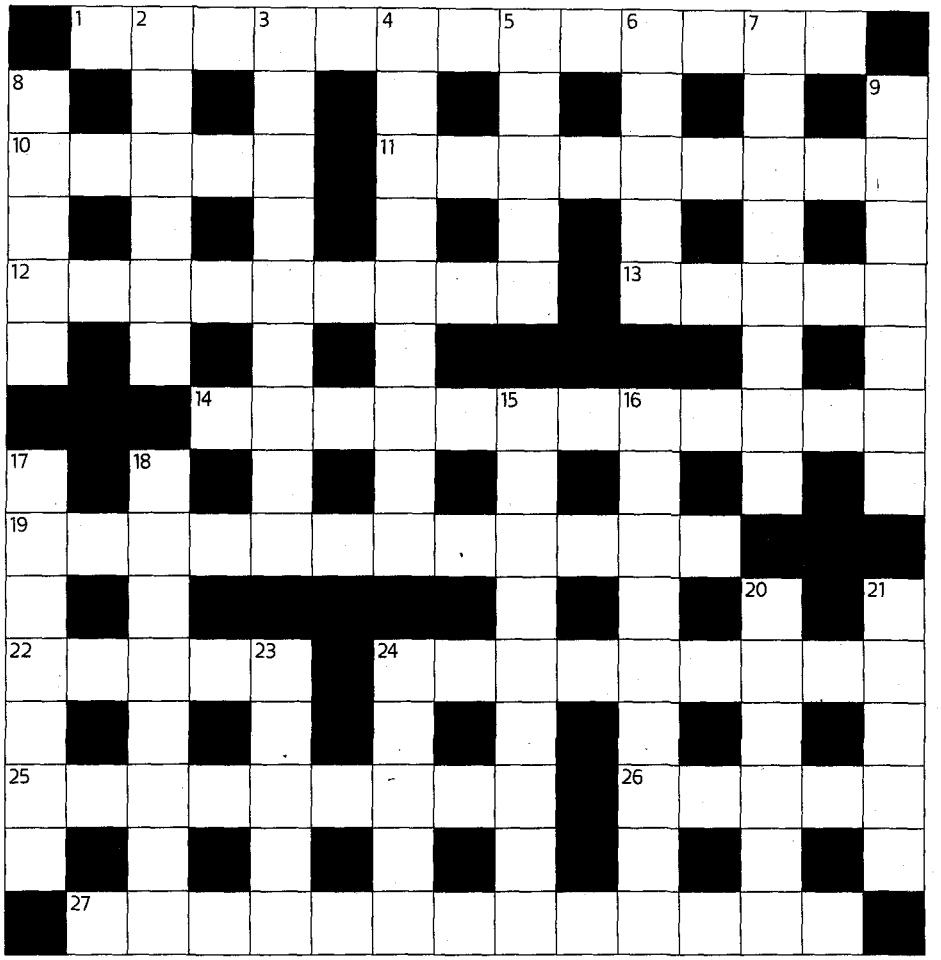
PUZZLE NO. 2971

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 Calls up an important date, and dines where people expect to see a close fight. (8,5)

10 Depend upon this being a real swinger at the opening! (5)

11 Billy's companion is tender, but you might say the unwanted might get yours, finally. (5,4)

12 They may have created serenades at one time, being sort of slim, having a stern makeup. (9)

13 Not exactly those letters taken from the crumpled sheet. (5)

14 The international organization goes to a sort of match (on horseback) to obtain a large number—and is definitely not sorry. (12)

19 Lady Godiva, for example. (12)

22 You're out of your class if they do it to you. (5)

24 Proving Mather had spirit, this made things less seedy. (Take to drink?) (6,3)

25 Because of this, the umpire has something of mine. (9)

26 Got an answer for this, possibly? Then dance for it! (5)

27 Capitalist? (Is the laundry not coming back in a mess?) (13)

DOWN

2 See 17

3 Sent at seasonable times, proving a wild egret gets to sing, but badly. (9)

4 Mine host, as they sometimes say, sounds as though he doesn't stay out. (9)

5 Proving seabirds are possibly seen here—which is about right! (5)

6 Where Moses said, "Let my people go!" (5)

7 People often say they want to put theirs in, for what it's worth. (3,5)

8 and **21** You might scrape your finger in pointing this out, but acting bad might bring it. (5,2,3)

9 See 17

15 A letter is mixed up to be inert. (3,2,4)

16 Cellulose nitrate—something that goes bang on the little bed, not getting up! (Sounds as though you and I switch to get 24!) (3,6)

17, 2 and **9** Something you're expected to stand up for when the game is about up. (7,6,7)

18 The coach comes up to sort of open a thing that's not always pleasantly served. (8)

20 What shows your years, and incorrectly shows what you are about to do. (6)

21 See 8

23 It used to draw blood when the general went to church! (5)

24 Sing, after a fashion, and take advantage of someone about the alternative coming up. (5)

PUZZLED? No more cross words. If you don't see why "Lures" are "Ground Rules" send for those of Mr. Lewis to: Puzzled, The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003, or access our website at www.thenation.com/about/crossword.mhtml.

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 2970

W	E	L	L	W	O	R	N	■	P	H	R	A	S	E
I	■	U	■	A	■	O	■	L	■	I	■	R	■	X
T	A	C	I	T	U	S	■	A	N	T	E	D	U	P
H	■	R	■	C	■	E	■	C	■	C	■	U	■	A
O	B	E	A	H	■	T	O	U	C	H	D	O	W	N
U	■	■	■	D	■	T	■	N	■	■	■	U	■	D
T	E	M	P	O	■	A	S	A	F	E	A	S	T	■
A	■	I	■	G	■	■	■	■	■	S	■	L	■	R
■	I	S	A	S	G	O	O	D	■	T	H	Y	M	E
E	■	C	■	■	■	U	■	U	■	A	■	■	■	S
N	O	R	T	H	S	T	A	R	■	B	R	O	K	E
O	■	E	■	E	■	L	■	A	■	L	■	T	■	E
U	P	A	T	R	E	E	■	N	E	I	G	H	E	D
G	■	N	■	O	■	T	■	G	■	S	■	E	■	E
H	O	T	A	N	D	■	B	O	T	H	E	R	E	D

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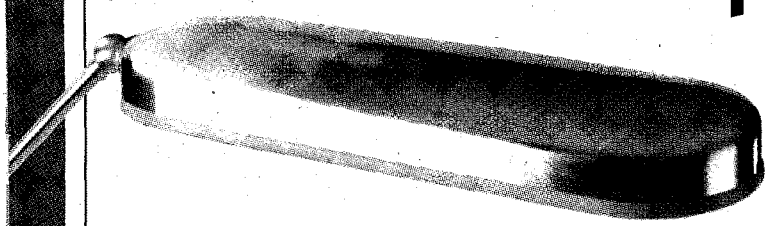
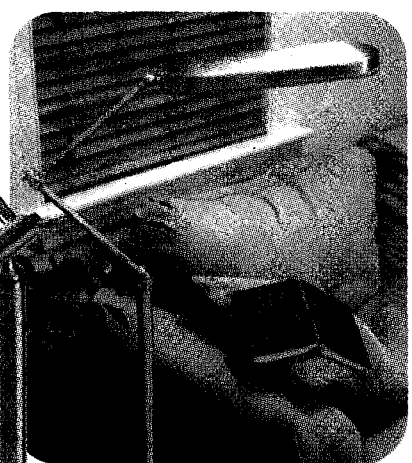
Sun Worshipers Rejoice!



It's time to bring more than twice as much natural light into your home in a design that's under $100.



Richmond, Va. 8:55 am—In a rare collaboration of technology and design, SunWhite Laboratories is releasing for the first time ever, a breakthrough in lighting technology designed by one of the top furniture designers in the United States. In the last few years, you may have read about a revolution in indoor lighting. A new phosphoric technology allows you to replicate the Natural daylight spectrum in your home. This helps you see better, distinguish colors more accurately and reduce glare. But most of these lamps run at only 18-27 watts and are designed in an unattractive plastic. That wasn't good enough. We worked with one of the best selling furniture designers to develop the Sunwhite 55. This gorgeous brass-finish lamp emits over 3900 lumens making it more than twice as bright as the 27-watt plastic lamps on the market. This outstanding light output is similar to a super bright 250 watt incandescent bulb but the SunWhite 55 is powered by a super efficient 55 watts. It shines brightly while using about 75% less electricity. And the bulb will burn for up to 5000 hours. This lamp will turn any room in your house into a sunroom.

Research has shown that daylight spectrum lighting can:

- Make reading easier.
- Ease eyestrain.
- Reveal sharper contrast and truer colors more accurately for reading, art, knitting and needlepoint.

It's time for every room in your house to move up to the natural daylight spectrum. Why has old incandescent light technology failed? The 100 year old construction of an ordinary incandescent bulb's light is concentrated on the orange-red part of the spectrum creating a dim yellowish light. The light from traditional fluorescent bulbs is concentrated on the yellow green portion of the spectrum giving your room a sickly greenish color.

A design you can live with. You have spent thousands on your fine home furnishings. You want your lamps to be as elegant as your home. Finished in brass, the SunWhite 55 is elegant technology that will fit into the décor of your home!

Now is the time for pure white light. The SunWhite difference is inspired by the sun. Daylight spectrum lighting uses all of the visible colors in sunlight. Complex hobbies and small type becomes easier to see and color matching is much more exact. The long neck of the floor lamp has multiple hinges that allow you to point the light where it is needed most.

- **More light output than a standard 100 watt**
- **Bulb has 5,000 hour life**

You would expect to pay $200 to $300 for a lamp this advanced. In fact many 27 watt plastic lamps are still priced over $120. But the SunWhite 55 is priced at only 3 payments of $33. Try it in your home. We offer you a 60-day money-back guarantee. If you're not satisfied, just return the lamp for the full purchase price, no questions asked. Call now to take advantage of our special offer. This is a special direct offer in conjunction with SunWhite Laboratories and is not available in any store.

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